

Stour Vale Letter No. 37

In our Churches:



We continue through this second lockdown, hopefully only until Wednesday 2nd December. The government instruction for places of worship is that they should close for this period except for funerals and private prayer. Those churches amongst our parishes that open for private prayer will continue to do so. (see the list below)

Online Services continue

Yes, for the lockdown duration we will be live streaming a service of Morning Worship on Sunday mornings at 11.00am. These will be on:

Sunday 22nd November – Christ the King
Sunday 29th November – Advent Sunday



Join us live on: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Anglican-Church/Stour-Vale-CofE-107130680934164/> or watch the video afterwards. Remember, you do not have to have a Facebook account to join us. If you see a box asking you to do so, just click “Not Now” and watch as a visitor.

Readings and Collect for 22nd November

Ezekiel 34.11-16, 20-24 Ephesians 1.15-end Matthew 25. 31-46
Psalm 95.1-7



Collect: Eternal Father, whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over all things as Lord and King: keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Church of England's Month of Prayer



Do join in with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York month of prayer. They ask us to pray at 6pm each day but, of course, do be flexible with the time and do whatever suits you.

There is a web link to some resources at <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches/call-prayer-nation>

Compline for Advent



Advent is fast approaching and our weekly service of Compline returns for the season! With the unpredictability of our current situation, we are offering these services online this year but do join us from wherever you are for the peaceful evening service of Compline, a short reflection on an Advent theme and some special music based on Advent hymns from Ralph.

All begin at 7.00pm on the dates below live on our Facebook page, or watch the video afterwards at a time to suit you:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Anglican-Church/Stour-Vale-CofE-107130680934164/>

Tuesday 2nd December

Tuesday 9th December

Tuesday 16th December

Tuesday 22nd December

Prayer

May the sun bring you new energy by day,
May the moon softly restore you by night,
May the breeze blow new strength into your being,
Amen.



Poem for Christ the King

This Sunday is the feast of Christ the King and here is Malcolm Guite's sonnet for the occasion. It is based on the Gospel reading for the day: Matthew 25: 31-46.

Our King is calling from the hungry furrows
Whilst we are cruising through the aisles of plenty,
Our hoardings screen us from the man of sorrows,
Our soundtracks drown his murmur: 'I am thirsty'.
He stands in line to sign in as a stranger
And seek a welcome from the world he made,
We see him only as a threat, a danger,
He asks for clothes, we strip-search him instead.
And if he should fall sick then we take care
That he does not infect our private health,
We lock him in the prisons of our fear
Lest he unlock the prison of our wealth.
But still on Sunday we shall stand and sing
The praises of our hidden Lord and King.



Pause for Thought – A new Church Year



Next week is Advent Sunday when a new church year begins. In the Church of England we follow a three-year lectionary of readings, each focusing mainly on one of the three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. We are now coming to the end of the Year A, in which we have heard a lot of Matthew's gospel, and are about to enter Year B when we will be exploring the gospel of Mark.

Mark is a man in a hurry! His gospel is the shortest of all – just 16 chapters – and there is a tangible sense of urgency throughout. One of the most frequently used words is “immediately” – “and immediately they did this”....”and immediately he went there”. There is little detail in Mark – you can almost picture him writing everything down as fast as he can remember it. So what does Mark consider important? He makes no mention of the birth of Christ at all, but his opening focus is on John the Baptist – the messenger coming, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah, to prepare a way for the Lord. John appears in the wilderness and begins to baptize people in the river Jordan. The people flock to him, but John makes it clear that *“The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me and I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.”*

The author of Mark's gospel has no doubt of the identity of Jesus. He opens his gospel with the bold statement: *“The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”* And that opening sentence probably summarises what Mark feels is important. That this man on earth is the Son of God and what he brings is good news.

Mark is an impatient writer and wants to get on with the story – not the birth but the life, not the how but the why. And maybe this is the point to us, his readers; that this is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is here to redeem all humankind. Don't waste time looking for detail and don't be like the disciples, constantly confused. Several times Mark writes that Jesus was *“amazed at their unbelief”*. So his message to us is don't be like them. This is the Son of God, here on earth with stories that will change your life. Recognise him, welcome him, listen to him and believe.

Barbara

Quote of the Week

From Aled Jones' new book of Everyday Blessings:

“And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive.

You won't even be sure whether the storm is really over.

But one thing is certain.

When you come out of the storm,
you won't be the same person who walked in.

That's what this storm is all about.”



Haruki Murakami

For your Prayers

We pray for all who are struggling in these challenging times. We remember the ill and the anxious, the lonely and afraid, the forgotten and the unloved, the isolated and the those who are unable to meet with loved ones, those who find the world a confusing place, those who have lost their way, and those who feel alone, even when they are not.



We pray for those waiting for medical procedures and those whose treatment has been delayed. We pray for those suffering from Covid-19 and those with other medical conditions. We are thankful for the glimmers of hope appearing on vaccines and for those that volunteer in their testing. We pray for all who help those in need: our medical professions, our carers and health visitors, our counsellors and those who operate helplines, and all in our communities who simply keep a kindly eye on their neighbours. May everyone know God's comforting arms around them and feel his love as a cloak of protection and strength.

And we pray for our church communities as our church buildings are shut once again. May they support each other and prove to the communities that surround them that the church is not confined within Sunday walls but showing God's glory out and about, each and every day.

Private Prayer

Our churches are allowed to remain open for private prayer or just to sit for a while in the peace and quiet of our ancient buildings. Please do take advantage of this.

Buckhorn Weston	Thursdays	10am - 12 noon
East Stour	Thursdays	10am – 12 noon
Kington Magna	Tuesdays	10am – 12 noon
West Stour	Wednesdays	10am – 12 noon

Todber is currently closed due to ceiling damage.

Fifehead Magdalen and Stour Provost are not able to open their churches during the week. But please do remember all these three communities in your prayers.

This Newsletter



If you know of anyone who doesn't yet receive the newsletter but would like to, let them know about it and tell them to send their email address to richard@allegro.co.uk with the subject "Newsletter Mailing List" But, if you do not wish to continue receiving them, please email him at with "Unsubscribe" in the subject field.

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