

Parish News

St Mary the Virgin, Saffron Walden

St John, Little Walden and St James, Swards End

Part of Saffron Walden & Villages Team Ministry



March 2021

FREE

**Wednesday 3 March at 7.30pm
at
St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden**

**The Institution
by the Bishop of Colchester
The Rt Rev'd Roger Morris
and the
Induction, Installation and Commissioning
by the Archdeacon of Stansted
The Venerable Robin King
of
The Rev'd Jeremy Trew**



as Team Rector and Area Dean

**Due to the current restrictions the Church will not be open
but the service will be livestreamed to YouTube: -
<https://youtu.be/r-TAWV-r8yo>**

**The Order of Service is available at
www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org**

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PARISH NEWS - EDITORIAL DEADLINE

The deadline for contributions for each issue is the 1st Sunday of the month. Hence, the deadline for the **April** issue is **Sunday 7th March**.

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www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/parishnews

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Photographed by Gilly Hayes

During the lockdown...

If you would like to be added to our weekly mailing list, email: -

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St Mary's Church Website:

www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org

TEAM RECTOR:	The Rev'd Jeremy Trew (<i>from 3rd March</i>)
ASSISTANT CURATE:	The Rev'd Rachel Prior (<i>currently on maternity leave</i>)
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Pastoral Letter

From The Rev'd Dr Caroline Curren

Dear Friends

Lent is traditionally a period of self-denial. Yet I wonder how we would have reacted last year if we had been encouraged for just 40 days to give up meeting friends and family, hugging grandchildren, going on holiday and even going to the shops? Yet that is the regime that started in March 2020 and under which we still live a year later.

The purpose of self-denial during Lent has always been to grow in faith. So perhaps we should ask ourselves how this enforced self-denial has helped us to do this. What have we learned, and in what ways has our faith developed?

The same might be asked of a period of Vacancy. This month we welcome Jeremy to lead our Team Ministry in Saffron Walden and the Villages. It is indeed a great joy to welcome him and his wife Alison amongst us. Like Lent, however, a period of Vacancy is not simply a time when things are tough, when we have to work harder to keep the show on the road – although our churchwardens and all involved have certainly done that, and we are enormously grateful to them. It can be a period of learning and growth, a time in which we draw closer to each other and to God.

With many in our congregations having received the vaccine, bringing hope of a way out of lockdown and return to worship in our church buildings, we look to a new future nationally. With a new Rector to lead us, we look to a new chapter in the life of the Church here in Saffron Walden. Yet this future can only be built on the lessons we have learned in the past year or more.

As the first in our Archdeaconry to have been licensed by zoom – in April last year - I have much sympathy for Jeremy arriving during this time when we cannot celebrate or welcome him and his family in the usual ways. In normal times, hospitality is an important part of such welcome – and we are good at that in this place! I know that Jeremy will want to get to know us, and that we want to get to know him, and that this will be somewhat hampered by whatever restrictions are still in place. Yet perhaps a lack of such occasions will give him time to settle with us gradually and gently.

Whatever practical arrangements are possible, we will each want to enquire of the other what we have learned during this time of restrictions, and how it has helped us to grow in faith, as we seek together to build upon this



for whatever lies ahead. The various opportunities for Lenten study and reflection, including the Quiet morning on 13th March, are all part of this as together we look back and also forward.

The year has brought tragedy for so many, and challenges and disappointments for us all, but through it all, I have had a deep sense of God's on-going presence alongside the encouragement of our church fellowship, and I hope that this has also been your experience. We can be sure that this will continue to be the case as we move ahead together in His name

With love,
Caroline

Fasting and Feasting in Lent

Fast from judging others

Fast from the emphasis on differences

Fast from discontent

Fast from anger

Fast from worry

Fast from negatives

Fast from unrelenting pressures

Fast from hostility

Fast from bitterness

Fast from discouragements

Fast from facts that depress

Fast from lethargy

Feast on the Christ dwelling in them

Feast on the unity of life

Feast on gratitude

Feast on patience

Feast on divine order

Feast on affirmatives

Feast on prayer

Feast on non-resistance

Feast on forgiveness

Feast on hope

Feast on the verities that uplift

Feast on enthusiasm

I wrote this when I was learning Calligraphy in Leicester.
Sheilah Girgis-Hanna



From the Registers

Funerals

We send our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of:

15 Jan. John Jeremy Collingwood

29 Jan. Rosemary Burns

*Praying for them and for those who mourn
"May they rest in peace"*



FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER FOR HEALTH AND HEALING

For many years there has been a small group at St Mary's who have received requests for prayer for individuals in need of prayer for help or healing. These requests have been passed down a prayer chain to reach everyone in the group fairly quickly, so that the individuals concerned can be supported by prayer.

In normal circumstances, some of the group would hold a brief meeting each month to pray together for those who have asked for prayer. This has not been possible during the last year with the covid restrictions, but will hopefully resume again, when meetings are allowed.

If you wish to ask for prayer for yourself or for someone else, please phone me with a name and brief explanation. It can be just a Christian name, but do get the permission of the person concerned. The request can then be passed on to the others in the group.

Kathryn Fiddock (Tel: 01799 500 844)



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Outreach in Romania

David and Sari Gardner work as Bible Translators in Romania for Wycliffe Bible Translators. The Winter 2020 edition of their "Words for Life" magazine carried an article about women and their families. This article included a section on Sari & her family. This is reproduced (with Wycliffe's permission) below.

'You belong in several places at once'

Sari Gardner and her husband David serve in Romania, helping Roma communities access the good news of Jesus in their own languages. They have four children. Sari comments: 'Living here has helped me to see what it is like to live as a member of a minority, and how successful mother-tongue education can be.' She says:



The Gardner family walking to Church together

'I am from Hungary, and there are Hungarian schools in many parts of Romania. Our children speak Hungarian, English (their father's language) and Romanian. They were able to learn to read in a language that they already spoke. They have made friends in their various schools, and they have been exposed to different opinions and encouraged to think about issues that in their home countries they wouldn't have given a thought to.

They have experienced hardships too. They have always been considered outsiders and maybe always will be. People in a small village do not easily accept newcomers, so making friends is possible, but it is often difficult. Our daughter Aniko says, "While you do not really know where you belong, you do belong to several places at once to some extent."



Our children have not had it as hard as some minorities. Roma (Gypsy) children in our village have to learn to read in a language that they do not speak very well. They need to fight prejudice if they want to succeed at school.

Our younger son Erik has helped us provide books and an alphabet app for these children. He has translated children's books, typed up the text and tested the app. He plays with the children when they come for reading lessons and encourages them to go to school. He is only 9 years old but already knows that not all of us have the same opportunities in life.'

Words for life is not available on line but copies are available via

<https://www.wycliffe.org.uk/resources/words-for-life/>

or contact Mary and Gerald who have a few spare copies: Gerald.gardner@ntlworld.com



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Clifford Want continues his series on Hymn writers

Joachim Neander (Neumann) (1650 – 1680)

'All my Hope on God is Founded'

Joachim Neander was born in Bremen, the eldest child of a Latin teacher. His grandfather, a musician, had changed the family name from the original *Neumann* to the Graeco-Roman form Neander, following the fashion of the time.

He studied theology at Bremen University from 1666 to 1670. German student life in the 17th century was anything but refined but in July 1670, Theodore Under-Eyck came to Bremen as pastor of St. Martin's Church. The earnest words of Under-Eyck touched his heart; and this, with his subsequent

conversations with Under-Eyck, proved the turning point of his spiritual life.

In 1671 he became a tutor in Heidelberg, and in 1674 he became a teacher in a Latin school in Düsseldorf.

There, he frequented the valley of the Düssel river, nature being the inspiration for his poems, but he also held gatherings and services. The valley was renamed "Neandertal" in his honour in the early 19th century and a large cave was named Neanderhöhle. Until the 19th Century, the valley was a deep ravine between rock faces and forests, with numerous caves, grottos and waterfalls. In the mid-19th Century, the cement industry started to quarry the limestone, and the narrow ravine became a wide valley. In 1856 the remains of the *Homo neanderthalensis* were found there.

Neander worked harmoniously alongside the minister in Düsseldorf at first, preaching in the church and assisting in the visitation of the sick. But he began to hold prayer meetings of his own, without informing or consulting the minister or elders; to absent himself from Holy Communion, on the grounds that he could not conscientiously commune with the unconverted, and persuaded others to follow this example. He produced a new timetable for the school, made alterations to the school buildings, held examinations and appointed holidays without consulting anyone.

The result was suspension from school and pulpit on Feb. 3, 1677 but on Feb. 17 he signed a declaration by which he bound himself not to repeat any of these acts; and was permitted to resume his duties as rector but not as assistant minister.



Continued on page 13...



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In 1679, he was invited to Bremen as unordained assistant to Under-Eyck at St. Martin's Church. Under-Eyck would probably have had him appointed to St. Stephen's Church, the pastorate of which became vacant in September 1680, but meantime Neander died, aged only 30, on 31 May 31 1680, variously reported as of tuberculosis or of the plague.

Neander wrote about 60 hymns and provided tunes for many of them. He is considered by many as the outstanding hymn writer of the German Reformed Church. A number of Neander's hymns were circulated among his friends at Düsseldorf in MS., but they were first collected and published after his move to Bremen.

His most famous hymn is probably *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation*, which had several English translations.

All My Hope on God is Founded is another well-known hymn, which established itself in the latter part of the twentieth century. The original German words were written around 1680. In 1899 they were freely translated into English by Robert Bridges, in Yattendon, Berkshire, where he was choir master for the parish church. He leads us through the 'changes and chances of this fleeting world' towards the new things that God has in store for us, with a point of affirmation in the two short lines towards the end of each verse.

The original tune was a German chorale melody named *Meine Hoffnung*. In 1930, the director of music at Charterhouse School, requested Howells to compose a new setting of the hymn for use at the school. Howells received the request in the middle of breakfast. The tune was apparently composed on the spot "while I was chewing bacon and sausage." The completed setting, titled *A Hymn Tune for Charterhouse*, was sent to Fielden, and became a regularly used hymn in public schools. Howells' son Michael died in childhood in 1935, and in tribute Howells rechristened the tune *Michael*.

Clifford Want – with thanks to the Internet.

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St Mary's Music News

The choir's celebration of Epiphany has been very different from usual in lockdown 3. No Epiphany carol service, and there will be no February choral evensong. Undeterred, Oli King has been determined that choir practices should follow the liturgical year, and we have been busy reacquainting ourselves with familiar pieces, as well as learning new ones. In particular Oli has found some terrific carols to share with the congregation in future.



Image by Armin Schreijäg from Pixabay

We are all now very used to Zoom rehearsals. These start with physical and vocal exercises. The physical ones involve a lot of stretching, yawning and waving our arms about like trees – very reminiscent of PE classes at primary school in the mid 20th century. Yes, that long ago! The vocal exercises include the usual scales, arpeggios and counting up to, say 25, on one long breath. More idiosyncratically, tongue twisters are forming an increasing part of the warm up. Try saying 'Paul, please pause for proper applause' three times. And if that's too easy, try 'Blue glitter glue glues blue glitter'!

Continued on page 17...

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After we have warmed up, we sing either as a whole group or in separate breakout rooms for the sopranos, altos, tenors and basses respectively. In either case, we can hear only the person playing the piano and not our fellow choristers. This makes learning new material particularly challenging. To help with this, and thanks to the wonders of modern technology organised by Patrick Li, our effectively solo sessions are interspersed with karaoke-style sing-alongs to YouTube recordings of the pieces we are rehearsing. There can be problems with strange timings, the lack of a conductor and jumpy Internet connections, but generally it works pretty well.

During January the choir has been represented in Sunday services both by soloists or family couples in person, and also by recordings done in our separate homes, based on our rehearsals and stitched together skilfully as ever by Peter De Vile. In January the senior and junior choirs joined forces for recordings of the well-known and much loved piece 'The Three Kings' by Peter Cornelius on Epiphany 3 and the gently moving motet 'When to the temple Mary went' by Johannes Eccard for the Presentation of Christ/Epiphany 4.

At first many of us found recording at home very daunting. It involves juggling the sheet music, one device playing the guide track through headphones, and another such as a smartphone recording our efforts. We have learned from radio presenters that a small, soft, padded environment is best for clear sound reproduction, though no-one has yet reported crouching in their airing cupboard wrapped in a duvet as apparently some Archers actors do. A padded ironing board has become a music stand staple for many of us, and we have all developed ways of limiting the rustle of papers as we move to the next page of music. Then there is the actual singing. It is a very odd experience hearing one's own squeaks and gasps for breath played back on an unforgiving phone. But eventually the perfect recording has almost been completed – until a dog or child comes into the room, or a plane or motor bike roars past, and everything has to be done again. I cannot speak for the rest of the choir, but unexpectedly this past year has made me more confident about singing on my own. However, we are all very, very keen to get back to singing together in real life, even if this means doing so in special so-called 'public speaking' masks.

By the time this article is published, the choir will have sung in a livestreamed plainsong service of Compline Sunday 21 February, led by Marisa Baltrock. I hope it will be available on YouTube.

Looking forward, we are rehearsing music for the Induction of Jeremy Trew as Team Rector on 3rd March. It will still, no doubt, be some form of lockdown service, but we are all hoping to contribute to this special day for Jeremy and St Mary's.

Otilie Lefever.

Calendar for March 2021

This calendar is provisional and subject to change with government restrictions, see The Grapevine or the church website for the latest information and login details. See weekly bulletin for services streamed from village churches.

St Mary's, Saffron Walden

Most services, except family services, are broadcast on YouTube and some on Zoom - details from the website. Congregations cannot currently be accommodated in church under compliance with physical distancing.

Wednesday 3 March

7.30pm Institution, Induction, Installation and Commissioning of Rev'd Jeremy Trew as Team Rector and Area Dean

Sunday 7 March (Lent 3)

8am Holy Communion (1662)

6.30pm H2H

Saturday 13 March

10am Quiet Morning

Sunday 14 March (Mothering Sunday)

10am Family Service

Sunday 21 March (Lent 5)

10am Holy Communion

Sunday 28 March (Palm Sunday)

10am Holy Communion & Passion Reading

6.30pm Choral Evensong *(may be cancelled)*

Holy Week - Monday 29 March - Wednesday 31 March *(details still to be confirmed)*

8.30am Morning Prayer (Wednesday 8am)

9.30am Holy Communion



Streamed weekday services - See weekly bulletin for sign in details.

Daily from 8th March

8.30am Morning Prayer (8am on Wednesdays, 9am on Saturdays) - *to be confirmed*

Tuesdays

5pm Evening Prayer

Wednesdays

9.30am Holy Communion

St James', Sewards End

Sunday 14 March (Mothering Sunday)

9.30am Zoom Simple Family Service



Sunday 28 March (Palm Sunday)

9.30am Zoom Simple Holy Communion - *unless church is open*

St John's, Little Walden - only if church is open

Sunday 14 March (Mothering Sunday)

11.15am Family Service

Sunday 28 March (Palm Sunday)

11.15am Holy Communion



Prayer for the month of March *provided by the Prayer Team*

A green heart

At this time of the year many of us would normally be visiting Angelsey Abbey to see their famous winter gardens: 2021 is different, of course! But I saw a lovely drift of snowdrops while walking the other day and remembered this beautiful prayer. How apt that, as we look towards Easter and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, one expanded meaning of 'benison' (line 3) is 'god-send'.

Into a dark world
a snowdrop comes,
a benison of hope and peace,
carrying within it
a green heart,
symbol of God's renewing love.

Come to inhabit our darkness
Lord Christ,
for dark and light
are alike to you.

May nature's white candles of hope
remind us of your birth
and light our journey
through Lent and beyond.



From *The Green Heart of the Snowdrop*
by Kate McIlhagga

One Planet Economics

They kept coming, witness after witness, to tell the inquiry that the economy of our region depends on the growth of Stansted Airport. As if Uttlesford District Council were trying to close the airport, rather than put a cautious limit on its growth to 35 million passengers each year rather than allow the 43 million that the airport wants.

No one was asking for job cuts. No one was trying to reduce the economy. In 2019 there were 28 million passengers, so there was existing permission for 21% growth even after we have recovered from Covid!

But there is a deeper question here. Do we need ... can we *afford*, constant, unlimited growth? Our current economy seems to require 2.5% growth in GDP every year. It sounds modest but means a doubling of production and consumption by 2050 and a quadrupling by 2077. Since CO₂ emissions, material consumption and waste go up at the same rate, that means our planet will have to double and quadruple likewise!



Sadly, we don't have an infinite planet that can support infinite growth and absorb infinite pollution. We have just one, perfect, delicate and very small planet. We need to adjust our economic model to one that accepts that we have only one home, one planet: **One Planet Economics**.

Mark Carney's Reith lectures pointed out the vast gulf between our Values and the monetary value we put on things. We value our nurses, care workers, midwives and refuse collectors, but we pay them very little compared to our footballers, celebrities, city bankers and CEOs. Why do we do that? Maybe we have been measuring the wrong thing.

Gross Domestic Product is 'the monetary measure of the market value of all the final goods and services that are bought by the final user'. It is NOT a measure of any increase in jobs, of any reduction in poverty, of social justice, of any improvements in health or any business success. Indeed, it seems to correlate much more closely with the growing inequalities of rich and poor, monopolies that swallow smaller businesses, the pressure to drive down wages and over consumption.

We thought economic growth would ensure that things would be better for our children, but we now have a generation who, even before the pandemic struck, were struggling to get decent jobs, to hope for a secure future, let alone buy a home! Social mobility has ground to a halt and life expectancy is beginning to fall for the first time in some parts of the country!

Social inequalities are increasing at break-neck speed in fact. Oxfam's report, *The Inequality Virus*, tells us that the combined wealth of the world's 10 richest people rose by £540 *billion* during the coronavirus pandemic; Jeff Bezos made a record \$13bn in just one day and FTSE 100 chief executives after the first 3 days' work in January had earned above the average wage of £29,559. I wonder how they will get through the eye of a needle!

At the other end of the scale, those working in the gig economy or on zero hours contracts are struggling to feed their families. The 'trickle down' effect just doesn't seem to be working.

Maybe our economy would function better if we started measuring the things we have learned to value during lockdown: our health, happiness and wellbeing; the people who care for us and teach our children; the beauty of nature and of clear skies; community. The Sustainable Development Index does roughly that: it measures income, health and education within the scope of a single planet.

I think Jesus would approve.

Edward Gildea, Eco Team Leader

Paddy McKeown



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YOU in the PEW

interviewed by Chris Bishop

Judith Felgate

Judith was born in Braintree, and has four siblings. She was brought up in a Christian family in a Brethren denomination, where she became a Christian, and was baptised as a teenager. She met Mike through youth camp connections when she was 18 years old, and three years later they married and made a home in Hadleigh, Essex. Twelve years later Mike found promotion to a job in Newport (given to him by Bill Rose!) and so Judith and Mike moved to Saffron Walden with their two sons, Jonathan and Nathaniel in 1985.



It was the natural thing to attend Gold Street Chapel (now Saffron Walden Community Church) when they arrived in Saffron Walden as it was also a Brethren church, but having attended the church for 3 years, Judith and the family decided it was time to move to new pastures. Although at the time it seemed a rather drastic move, it felt right to join the congregation at St Mary's, where she and Mike were soon to be Confirmed, and where they have now worshipped for 32 years.

It was not long before Judith was drawn into serving as a Sunday School teacher, and then as the years passed, into the Pram Service, (now Tinies). This led on to leading a Bible Study for the Pram Service mothers, and then subsequently into starting, with others, Women's Own, the Saturday morning breakfast for the ladies of the parish.

Judith enjoys being creative, and likes to try different crafts. She also loves to be out walking and cycling in the local countryside, and further afield when permitted! She feels that probably one of the most enjoyable and rewarding times at St Mary's was being part of Women's Own, and feels blessed to have been able to serve in this way.

If she had a family coat of arms her motto would be: -

'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord'. Joshua 24.15



Smile Lines

I didn't think the chiropractor would improve my posture. But I stand corrected.

What did the surgeon say to the patient who insisted on closing up his own incision?
Suture self.

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Archive Group *findings...*



March 1890. Parishes within the Deanery

Audley End

The Members of the Institute are looking forward to an Entertainment to be given after Easter in the place of one to have taken place last month that had to be postponed owing to the prevalence of influenza.

Quendon

The prevailing epidemic of influenza has raged principally amongst the young men of this Parish. Their anxiety to get back to their work has induced many of them to face the east wind and the raw weather all too soon, with the natural result of severe bronchial colds.

Langley (An evening entertainment)

The rest of the evening was devoted to the Magic Lantern. Many pictures being old favourites received a hearty welcome from the children. The apples kindly given by Miss Pilgrim were much appreciated. We are sorry to say that several were prevented from being with us through illness. On leaving each man had a little tobacco, the women a small packet of tea each, and the children an orange.

Littlebury

It is hoped that, when the illness in the Parish has a little subsided, many who are not yet communicants, especially men, will take advantage of the addresses on the Holy Communion given on Friday nights at 7.30 and regard them as a preparation for communicating at Easter. On Friday, March 7th, however, there will not be an address.....Owing to the presence of the epidemic in the village our Entertainments came to an untimely end, the Choir

Continued on page 27...



Hearing Help Essex **NHS Hearing Aid Support Service**

Due to Covid-19 we cannot resume our Hearing Help Sessions at our community venues just yet, but the good news is we're able to offer appointments at our new Resource Centre on Moulsham Street in central Chelmsford, and also offer a door-step service for those who are Housebound, shielding, or have reduced mobility.

We are following Covid-19 guidance and are able to adhere to 2m social distancing. If you would like to book an appointment, or be added to our contact list so we can let you know when your nearest session will resume, please contact us on the details below.

If you have an urgent issue with your hearing aid, or need batteries, please contact your Audiology Department direct who will be able to help you.

For more information please check website

www.hearinghelpessex.org.uk

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Email: **info@hearinghelpessex.org.uk**

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had planned a Concert, the Bellringers an Entertainment at Littlebury Green, and the Members of the Bible Class a Tea, but all have to be put off to a future date in Wendens Ambo. The Railway Porters were entertained at Supper at the Rectory on Thursday evening Jan.30th and Friday evening Jan 31st when they received this year, as they did last, a kind welcome from the Rector and Mrs Grey, who hope that they spent a pleasant evening.

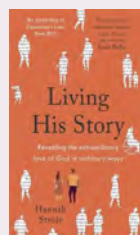
Chris Bishop. Archivist

Books for Lent

Living His Story – (The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book 2021)

By Hannah Steele, SPCK, £7.99

How can we convey the love of God to our neighbours in a post-Christian world that has largely forgotten the gospel of Jesus Christ?



Come and See – learning from the life of Peter

By Stephen Cottrell, BRF, £7.99

Like us, Peter takes a step of faith and then flounders, and needs the saving touch of God to continue becoming the person he was created to be.



Jars of Clay – peace for the anxious soul

By Catherine Haddow, 10Publishing, £6.99

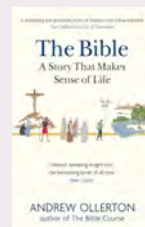
Deep and lasting peace can be found, not in a process, but in the person of Jesus who meets us in our fear and brokenness.



The Bible: a story that makes sense of life

By Andrew Ollerton, Bible Society, £14.99

The narratives in the Bible mirror the narrative arcs we go through.



The Dandelion

Dandelion plants are one of the most successful in our gardens, with a great ability to survive. They appear in Spring and continue to grow until about November.



Did you know that a dandelion has many nutritional benefits and can be used for many conditions, such as stomach or liver problems? As well as being used to make tea or beer and coffee. The leaves are full vitamins A, C, D, and B, and also minerals and antioxidants. We can even sometimes spot dandelion leaves in the bags of salad that we may buy. Dandelions belong to a large genus of plants which are related to sunflowers, always telling the same golden story and reminding us of the sun. These plants are also good for wildlife, they provide nectar for the bees and the butterflies, and are a major source of spring food. The humble dandelion has all these qualities, but wait, there is yet more.

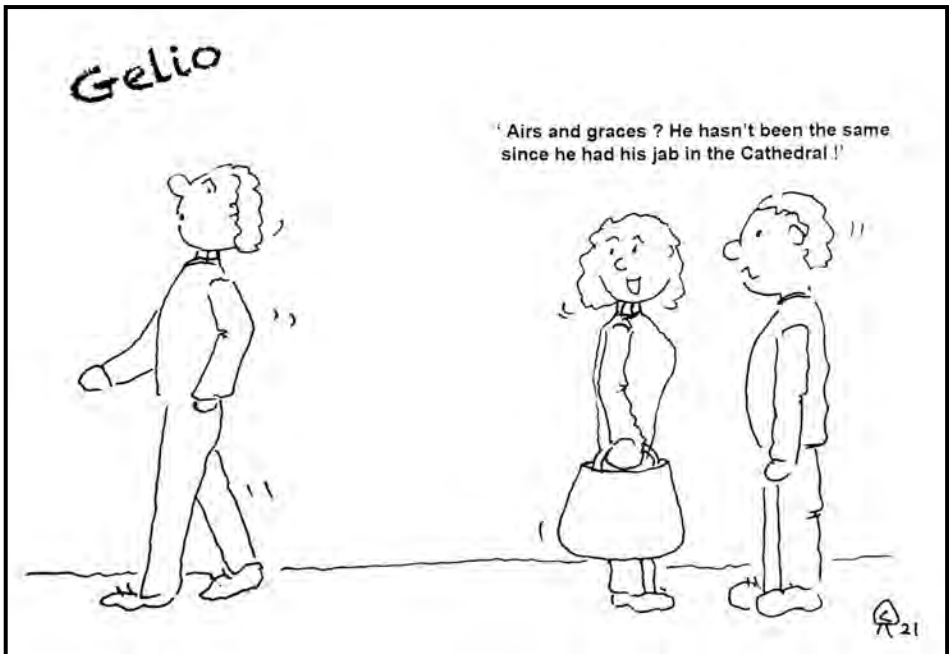
The dandelion is a tough flower, and they are part of nature's calendar. They do what they were meant to do, and grow happily wherever the seed has landed. It may be by your front door, or in your back garden, no matter if you are rich or poor, a dandelion is no respecter of persons. That reminds me of a verse. "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or non-circumcised, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." Colossians 3:11 NIV.

Do you remember as children we used to pick the dandelion's lovely, white puff balls, and blow them, 1 for a wish and 2 for a kiss? The tiny seeds can drift for miles on the slightest wind, and then germinate growing in odd places, maybe in your gutter or on grass verges. No matter what you do to it, the dandelion is resilient. You may burn it, eat it, maybe stamp on it but it still thrives. It rises above its circumstances and is not outdone, because it has a deep taproot, which keeps it firmly rooted. We must be the same. Know what you believe, what you stand for. Hang in there when others try to dig you up, God reassures you He will be with you, He cares. Another verse here. "They gave Moses this account: We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey!" Numbers 13:27 NIV

So, the dandelion can be found everywhere growing and smiling, seeking times and places where it can shine. The challenge is as Christians we should be the same, sowing the seed of God's love and bearing fruit, and thinking about these things as we battle against the dandelion or cultivate it for nourishment. But, as a last word, think of the bees, the caterpillars and the butterflies, perhaps you could spare a few dandelions here and there, maybe in a scruffy part of your garden.

Margaret Barnes

Image by Michael Schwarzenberger from Pixabay





The Grange Care Home

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An Accidental Crusoe

As a child you probably learned the story of Robinson Crusoe, the protagonist in the novel commonly known by that name, written at the beginning of the 18th century by author Daniel Defoe. The full title of the book hardly trips off the tongue, 'The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner: Who Lived Eight and Twenty Years, All Alone in an Uninhabited Island on the Coast of America, Near the Mouth of the Great River Oroonoke; Having Been Cast on Shore by Shipwreck, Wherein all the Men Perished but Himself, With an Account how he was at Last as Strangely Delivered by Pirates'; but it is at least instructive of the central theme of the story: that Crusoe found himself 'all alone in an uninhabited island'.

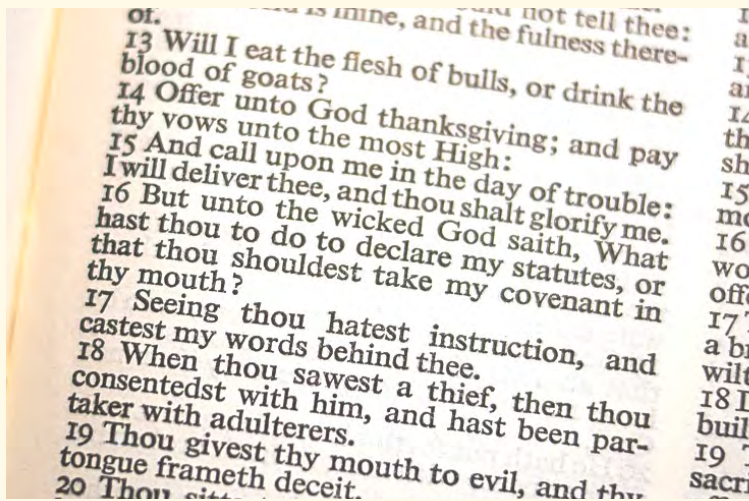
In these present times, living with the restrictions imposed to try and repel the threat of Covid, many of us will have felt alone, cut off from most of life's social interactions that we had taken so much for granted; and our homes, which once played host to visiting friends and family coming from near and far, have become their own uninhabited islands. What then might we learn from the story of Crusoe, as he grappled with circumstances recognisable to us?



Whilst he was without any human company, we learn early on that Crusoe made it ashore with a dog and two cats. He formed a bond with his animals which helped sustain him in his earliest days of isolation. That will come as no surprise

to today's pet owners, with one recent survey suggesting 86% of them had bonded more with their animals since lockdown began and 43% said their animal had helped reduce their anxiety. The companionship of animals, it seems, has never been more popular - with the RSPCA recently reporting a 600% increase in visits to its puppy fostering website - it seems unlikely this is a coincidence.

Beyond his animals, Crusoe's days were filled with the practical need to establish a habitat in which he could survive, providing for himself shelter and sustenance, but his nights were long and lonely. Nine months after his arrival on the island he becomes sick and takes to his bed, whereupon he has a dream in which he is visited by an angel. The message of the angel is terrifying for Crusoe; he is forced to confront his past sins, particularly his fractious relationship with his father. Upon waking he is shaken, and remarks that he has thus far lived without 'the least sense, either of the fear of God in danger, or of thankfulness to God in deliverances'.



Now Crusoe had not only rescued his animals from the shipwreck, but had also brought ashore a Bible. Moved by his dream, he opened it, and leaping off the page were the words of the 15th verse of the 50th Psalm, 'And call upon me in the day of trouble: so will I deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me'. Whether it was good fortune or providence which took him to these specific words we do not know (or whether they are one in the same thing) - Crusoe certainly believes it was the latter. So moved was he that he took to prayer, and 'prayed to God to fulfil the promise to [him]'.

In this there is surely a lesson for Christians: that despite the human isolation of the current situation, we are not alone. Just as Crusoe did, through prayer we can activate and reactivate our relationship with God as often as we need to. He

knows and understands we are suffering and He will hear us.

After this first experience Crusoe set about reading the New Testament, learning for himself about the example of Jesus and the teachings of the early Christians. From this he concludes that 'whenever [you] come to a true sense of things [you] will find deliverance from sin a much greater blessing than deliverance from affliction'.

Upon first reading one would be forgiven for thinking this is somewhat dismissive of human suffering, but by this time Crusoe has formed a deep Christian conviction that '...hope [is] founded on the encouragement of the Word of God'. Hope, a small word of just one syllable, but a powerful word nonetheless. Hope can vanquish fear; hope can gird us for challenges which lie ahead; hope can instil in us the fortitude to withstand suffering. But have we any hope?

Hope in the secular world comes and goes like the seasons, it is a feeling, an emotion; but for Christians, there is another hope. Through faith, hope is a sure and certain thing, that by the example of Jesus Christ we will have eternal life. Crusoe's faith gave him hope; surely ours can help sustain us through present troubles.

Even so, faith is often tested, and many of us will at times wander far from God and lose our way; our belief that God hears our prayers can be diminished by answers we cannot see or do not understand. So it was for Crusoe, who never stopped missing human company through all his time on the island, yet it was his first sighting of other people, a visiting tribe of 'savages', which sends him in to panic. His fear was misplaced for he would go on to form a strong personal bond with an escaped prisoner of the tribe, whom he named Friday.

This experience taught Crusoe an important lesson, that even though his faith was strong, prayers are often answered in unexpected ways. And so it was, after twenty-eight years, Crusoe was finally rescued from the island. An English captain whose ship was beset by mutineers came ashore. For helping him deal with the pirates, the captain offered Crusoe safe passage back to England: his deliverance had finally come. Through faith and prayer and hope, ours too will come - and until that day, like for Crusoe, there's always the animals.

Adam Kelly

(Article supplied by Lesley Green and Kathleen Huey; used with the permission of the author.)

Mental health ideas for uncertain times

We may all have rather mixed feelings on reaching March this year. On the one hand, it is lovely to see the onset of Spring, and vaccinations and better weather may make handling the pandemic a little easier. On the other hand, marking a year from the start of the first UK lockdown will be painful for some, especially as many of us are likely to be experiencing restrictions or ongoing hardships for quite some time. We may need to find new ways to keep going, so here are some suggestions that draw on both science and Christian theology.

Time outdoors in a natural environment is very good for you – and you can't argue with the happy hormones produced by exercise. Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood, and increased life satisfaction. Enjoying creation can also help us connect with God.

Looking outside: If you are truly stuck indoors, try putting bird feeders outside your window so creation comes to you. This is also an act of kindness (see below)!

Lament and praise: The Psalms are a rich resource to help us express both our grief and our thanks to God. Try reading one or two each day.

Keep a journal of thoughts, experiences or practices you have engaged with during the day. Constructing a personal narrative or story is now recognised as a very powerful psychological and spiritual tool for building resilience. It is also a vital learning tool that we can go back to when tough times return in the future.

Helping or encouraging someone else is obviously a good thing to do in itself, but it also has a very positive effect on the giver - spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even physically. Whichever way you look at it, finding new ways to show kindness to others can be a very effective way to help ourselves feel better too.

Gratitude is another natural drug – in a sense – that can help us feel better. Try keeping a grateful diary, adding a few things each day.

Laugh, sing, make music, dance: All of these activities are deeply rooted in our physical and mental makeup. You may have forgotten how great they feel, especially in times of sadness, but we can learn from children who do them very naturally.

I hope these ideas may help bring us closer to God, each other, and His creation.

Dr Ruth M Bancewicz,
Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute in Cambridge.

Gardening Notes

Non-gardening folk imagine that at this time of year we all hibernate: not so, there's plenty to do planning the coming season and arranging the resultant purchases. Of course, early bulbs can be potted now, a job I look forward to as a precursor of the coming pleasure they will give me. I shall this year keep a couple of those pots in my greenhouse to promote growth and hopefully an early display.



My vegetable plans are—well, just that—plans, though my seed potatoes are purchased and in trays: they will be planted on the traditional day, St Patrick's Day, March 17th. I will this year plant one box of four potatoes at February's end and keep in the greenhouse for a hopefully even earlier crop.

The bad weather at the beginning of January finally saw off the aged posts and trellis over my mid garden feature; all eight well rotted posts either fell over or were removed and new posts and trellis installed. One side I will use for climbing French and Runner beans. The other side will again be clematis covered, interspersed with sweet peas.



Clematis flower
Image by MrGajowy3 from Pixabay

More later.

Charles White

Love in the Time of Covid
Finding God's Hope in difficult times



Quiet Morning

Via Zoom

Led by Revd Hilary Davey

On Saturday 13 March 2021

A Quiet Morning giving opportunity to
Reflect on our personal experiences, good and bad, of the last year

Ponder what we have learnt and want to retain

Find hope for a still somewhat uncertain future

Joining is at 9.50 until 9.55am

and will finish by midday

Please book your place by contacting Dawn in the Parish Office

- Zoom details and material for the morning will be sent nearer the time

For more information please contact Sue Walker - suewalker619@btinternet.com

St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden Website:

www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org