

*St Mary and St Cuthbert's Church*  
*Chester-le-Street*

# **SEPTEMBER**

## **2020**



**May God  
bless us and guide us**

Photograph by: Sarah-Lee Gordon Pearse

## Associate Vicar's Letter

Well it is time for me to say goodbye.

I was certainly expecting to serve in Chester-le-Street for more than three years, but as the saying goes, 'If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.'

The decision to retire so that I could be more available to support my family was not an easy one to make, but I did sense God's peace when Libby and I finally agreed that this was the right path, and it has been confirmed over and over again. I have lost count of the number of church members who have come up to me quietly, following a service, in the Parish Centre, or street, or during a home visit, and said something along the lines of 'I am so sorry you are leaving but I completely understand your decision, I am praying for you and your family.' I cannot begin to tell you what these quiet acts of kindness and support have meant to me. I do feel that I have received so much more than I have given during my time with you.

So, thank you. Thank you, Parish South for being such a wonderful fellowship, and for putting up with my idiosyncratic power points and your game willingness to worship with all your strength, even though (to paraphrase Eric Morecambe) I had the right words on the screen, they were just in the wrong order.

Thank you, Parish Centre staff, for your smiling willingness to provide tuna sandwiches even though this usually meant opening a new tin and creating lots of extra work.

Thank you 'Open the Book' team for 'dressing' me as once again I managed to put my costume on back to front or upside down.

Thank you, Parish North and Parish Central for your wonderfully warm welcome when I was 'playing away' on a Sunday morning.

Thank you staff team for your forbearance as I make my regular late appearance for Morning Prayer, blaming either weather, school logjam, earthquake, or revolution.

And on a serious note, thank you to all the congregations for your love and willingness to engage with God and His word, and to live your faith in the world.

I could not have asked for a more loving and committed church in which to serve, I am so thrilled that God saved the best till last.



Cont on page 3

Cont. from page 2

The future is uncertain, we don't know how long Covid 19 will be around, future staffing levels are uncertain, financially many churches are feeling the strain. But I am always inspired by the early church. Facing increasing opposition and the threat of persecution, the believers prayed; *"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* Acts 4. 29-31

As you face an uncertain future, I know that you will not say 'How can we survive?' or 'How can we manage?' You will say; 'Lord, this is a wonderful season of opportunity, empower us to proclaim Jesus and to do great works in His name.'

May God continue to richly bless you as you give yourselves in His service.

**Jon**

## **FAREWELL TO REV JON WILKINSON**

I am sure many people will want to contribute to a farewell gift to Jon. He retires on Sunday September 13. We would like people to put gifts in a marked envelope on a collection plate or post it through the Parish Office letter box by Tuesday September 8.

Jon will be preaching at the 8.00 am and 10.00 am services in church on September 13, and we will give him the parish gift within the 10.00 am service (which will be broadcast live on our church Facebook page).

Also, on that Sunday at 11.15 am some of the Parish South congregation will be meeting in the large hall (Cuthbert) in the Parish Centre to say thank you and farewell to Jon in the context of worship. People need to book their places via the Parish Office.

We are not able to look for a replacement for Jon immediately, the next step is our local archdeacon Bob Cooper, will be attending our PCC Meeting in November.

## **REV SIMON GRUNDY'S CURACY**

In August Simon completed the formal Assessment at the End of Curacy (AEC) process, which generally happens about 3 years after ordination. AEC has run in the Church of England for about 15 years, it is intended to provide a fair and transparent system for determine whether the formation and training which a curacy is intended to enable has been successfully completed.

Cont on page 4

Cont from page 4

Simon remains a curate and can stay here as a curate through to summer 2021. He can apply for jobs in parishes now, though because of COVID and financial uncertainty in the diocese (so that virtually no appointments are being made before November), Simon will not be leaving us very soon.

Just in case of any confusion, our other curate, Rev Mark Harrison is a year "behind" Simon and will be going through the AEC process in spring 2021.

## **BOOKING FOR CHURCH SERVICES**

Services in the church building restarted in July, each Sunday there are 8.00 am HC (BCP), 10.00 am & 6.00 pm. There is also an online service broadcast each Sunday at 10.00 am on our church Facebook page. This month we start Thursday 10.45 am HC (BCP) services.

Numbers are very limited in the church because of the social distancing and one-way system, it is difficult to get more than about 35 in for any particular service.

The 10.00 am service is full (or very nearly so) each week. 8.00 am and 6.00 pm usually have 15-20 present.

You should wear a face covering in the church building – though the leader, preacher, Bible readers, intercessors do not wear them when they are speaking.

We are not allowed to sing – but we do play some music.

If you want to come to a service, we ask you to book via Jan [jrowland@clsparish1.plus.com](mailto:jrowland@clsparish1.plus.com) or phone her in the Parish Office on 0191 388.3295. Specific places are then allocated in church.

## **THURSDAY 10.45 am HC services (BCP)**

We have decided that in September we will hold this service, with the social distancing and one-way system used for all our services at present. It is a trial for 4 weeks and we will evaluate how it goes on and whether it will continue.

We have to clean the church after each service, so make it work, in September, there will only be private prayer on Tuesday afternoons (not on Thursdays).

## **CHURCH SERVICES**

With there being less people in the services because of social distancing, the clergy may use the same **Bible readings** and sermons in more than one service in a week. We want to warn people that sometimes that will take place.

Cont on page 5

Cont. from page 4

We are not using service books or booklets because of Church of England guidelines. We are using the projector and screen in all services for the congregation to participate. It creates a practical problem for the leader of the service at Communion for changing the slides on the screen. A remote control will not work from the high altar table. So, certainly if the leader is on his own at a Communion service, he will use a **small table** at the chancel step.

## FROM THE AUGUST REGISTERS

### Funerals

#### August

- 7 Raymond Bartlett (75)  
Doris Hall Mason (87)
- 11 Jessie Maria Brice (93)  
Ronald Murray (87)
- 12 Nancy Young (85)
- 18 Jane Shephard (84)
- 19 Marguerite Robertson (84)
- 25 Lilian Hall (95)
- 26 Shirley Lea Nelson (83)

### Weddings

#### August

- 1 Claire Louise Gilpin  
& Christopher Dawson
- 22 Joanne Hall  
& Craig Stevenson

## Parish Centre Coffee Lounge RE-OPENING - Tuesday 1st September

This will happen on **Tuesday September 1.**

Opening hours -

**Monday to Friday 10.30 am - 12.30 pm**

There will be a clear one-way system and most of the tables will be in "Mary," with 2 metres social distancing. We will be operating waitress/waiter service to the tables. Customers will not go to the hatch.

There will be a "welcome" in the foyer to explain the new procedures.

Initially there will be a very limited menu: sandwiches, soup, chips, scones, cake and drinks and revised prices. (No main meals or desserts).

We hope that people will come and feel comfortable, welcomed and safe. Spread the word.

# CHURCH FINANCE

We are very grateful to all those who use the Parish Giving Scheme or Standing Orders because that has given us a steady flow of income for the church.

However, we have not been receiving any café income or Parish Centre room hire income. We have received far less funeral and wedding fees and loose collections and envelopes than normal.

This creates problems for us – with the challenge of paying those we employ (though some have been on the furlough scheme). We are also really struggling to pay our 2020 pledge of £100,000 for Parish Share to the diocese (which is mainly paying for clergy). We will probably have a special one-off Gift Day later in the year.

We are delighted to have received some extra donations and many people have started using standing orders or the Parish Giving Scheme.

It is possible for anyone to contribute to our church finances from their bank into the church account.

The account is: *St Mary and St Cuthbert PCC, Chester-le-Street*. Account No. 50050083 Barclays bank. Sort code: 20-27-41.

## PARISH GIVING SCHEME (PGS)

In April the national PGS launched a 'donate by phone' option meaning givers don't even have to complete paperwork anymore.

You can set up a regular gift to our Parish by a single phone call to: 0333 002 1271. It is free number to call if you have bundled minutes, otherwise the charge is like a normal landline number.

A PGS administrator will take you through the process – it takes about 15 minutes.

You will be asked for:

- Your Personal bank account details
- The name of our parish which you wish to donate to
- Whether you want to increase your gift in line with inflation each year (or not)
- Confirm if you are eligible for Gift Aid (if you pay tax) or not
- The PGS code for our parish, which is 130313004

Already many of us use this scheme it is efficient, safe and completely free. We launched it in the parish in the summer of 2018. Over £3,500 comes through the scheme from our church members every month into our church account. Those of us who already use PGS have found it works very smoothly.

## THE DIARY OF A SONGWRITER - Rev Mark

It was 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019 when I wrote in my journal a reflection entitled 'music'. The first sentence reads, "Mark, get on with it". This is followed up with, "I am fearful of getting it wrong, it's been a long time. How many hours per week can I give to this?"

In March of this year I met with Paul Vincent to think about what music we should do. He came back with a challenge that we should write new songs.

Then in Lent, I took a week off duties to embark on a retreat and some time was given to being creative and reflecting on my song writing file. During that week a new song was birthed and many others were refined. All I needed was the music to go with the lyrics and the recording equipment to do a good job.

May 2020, the month of sunshine, and another song was produced and ready for music. With all the encouragement coming through time with God, I began to look at recording and made one important purchase. I now had a home recording studio to craft my songs.

The next question was which song to record first. I chose an easy option, revising one that I had recorded 35 years ago. The title of this song is "*I have a brand-new feeling*" and the way I received the words was interesting. It was on a sun-soaked day in July 1985 when I had finished work and was heading to the car park. From inside I burst into song and ran to my car and then in my personal space I sang my heart out. One year later I pulled together my band mates to record the song. The Bass player asked me, what is the song about? To my shame, I could not give to him an adequate answer.

So, what was the song about? Had I been too hasty in trying to record it before knowing myself what the song was about? This year, I found the answer to the question through reading my retreat books. The song was about becoming a dad at the birth of our first child and the gift of life coming to me through God's grace and mother Julie. In that return home to them, God was in my car stirring up the experience so that I would never forget the wonder of parenthood. In the coming months I put my Saturday band practices down and stopped meeting with other musicians to concentrate on loving my little girl....and her mum.

So dear friends, please be patient with me as I put the final touches to the recording of this song which has changed a lot since my retreat.

The next songs to be recorded are, 'Bransgore Sunshine', "With Your Strength", 'Where water makes no sound', 'Chapel, chapel going there', 'Isaiah 60', 'Butterfly playing on a sunlit morning' and 'What shall we say then?' I also will do a new version of One shall chase a thousand.

Cont from page 7

In reeling of this list, I have one final comment to make, "all I have to do is get on with it!" In addition, all I have to do is keep on listening for the move of Gods Spirit and do all things for the Glory of God.

## **DAILY HOPE, the national free 24 hour worship phonline**

It was launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby in April. It has received several hundred thousand calls, totalling many millions of minutes of listen time.

DAILY HOPE continues to be available 24 hours a day on: 0800 804 8044. Callers hear a greeting from the Archbishop before being able to choose from options including hymns, prayers, reflections and advice on COVID-19. The service continues to be updated with new material.

## **THE Postponed ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING (APCM)**

It is planned to be on **Tuesday October 20 at 7.30 pm** probably in the Parish Centre. Churches were allowed to postpone their APCM in the spring, but we have been asked to have them before the end of October

In preparation for this we have to update our **Church Electoral Roll** (our membership list, which gives voting rights at the APCM). Anyone who is baptised, is at least 16 and either lives in the parish and/or worships regularly with us is entitled to fill in the very simple form to come on the Roll. The Roll can be added to between **September 19 and October 5**.

There are forms at the back of church and in the Parish Office, if you are not sure if you are already on the list please ask Jan in the office. Normally we would have an Electoral Roll list for people to check at the back of church, but we cannot do that in the present circumstances



## QUIET CORNER

I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of.....; so reads the words on a bank note in my wallet which I have been unable to spend because most shops and businesses prefer a card payment to help stop the spread of the Covid 19 virus. The thing is, can I have any trust in that promise if and when I do use it? More to the point, will the amount that Sarah John, Chief Cashier of the Bank of England promises to pay me, be worth the same value at some point in the future as when I first acquired the bank note? The answer is probably not, so is her promise to be trusted? Indeed, can any promise or any person be trusted in this fast changing world we now live in.

Trust is something that differs between each individual and their own, personal circumstances. Many years ago we trusted Doctors, School Teachers, Accountants, Lawyers, Ministers of Religion and possibly even Politicians. Those days however are long gone, given all the sex and financial scandals that have taken place over the years. Following the drop in the Corona virus infections and what our Politicians are telling us in opening up the economy and businesses, can we trust what we hear so that we may go shopping, back to work, school or to attend Church services, even with all the guidelines and safety measures in place?

Very recently, trust has been in very short supply, especially in relation to school exam results throughout the UK. At least 40% of young people have lost all their trust in the school examination process following the downgrading of their exam results. This is likely to affect young students for the rest of their lives. When you lose trust at such an early age, it can have a very damaging and negative effect from that point on.

So the question remains, who and what can we trust? For one person in the Old Testament, this was not a problem. King David answers in Psalm 37 v3 *“Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness”* The Psalmist also wrote in Psalm 71 v5 *“For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth”*. The writer of the book of Proverbs goes further and says in Proverbs 3 v5: *“Trust in the Lord with your whole heart, and not your own judgement”*

Perhaps we of an older generation have an important role to play in teaching these verses to our children, grand children and even the children of neighbours and friends. When you trust in the Lord(Jesus) from our youth, our lives and the possibilities for our future, take on a whole new meaning beyond anything that exam results can achieve.

**John Hopper**  
(Lay Reader)

## UKRAINE 2020

As many of you will already know, in July I was supposed to travel to Ukraine as part of a team of young people who wanted to engage with the Ukrainian youth. We were going to work together to learn about each other's cultures and faith and aimed to run some day camps for younger children. We were travelling as part of Renew NE, a charity which focuses on youth work and whose leaders have extensive knowledge of Ukraine. However, due to Corona virus, this trip was unable to go ahead and got postponed to July 2021.

I needed to fundraise £800 to help get me there and to cover costs whilst I was there, I therefore organised coffee mornings, raffles and more for people to attend. However, due to Corona virus, only one out of my two coffee mornings went ahead - but I can't thank everyone enough that helped and supported me. I did however know that it might not be possible for everyone to attend my events so I therefore had a just-giving page set up so that if people wished they could still donate. I was overwhelmed by all the support I received and I am very thankful to say I exceeded my target of £800. My overall total came to £840.80 which is now in the reNEw bank account ready for next year

I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who supported me throughout this time, since the day I first found out I was going all the way through to the day I got the news that it was cancelled. I would also like to thank you all for your prayers throughout whether that be for the coffee mornings, fundraising events or something else. All your prayers and support have been truly appreciated and I don't think I could have got through this without you all. I am devastated that I couldn't visit Ukraine in 2020 but I look forward to 2021 when I hopefully will get this experience. Roll on July 2021!

***Abbie Winter***

## Feeding Time

A host of baby jackdaws,  
Perched upon the green,  
Eyes up, focused on  
Seeds, that slipped unseen  
Down from the cylinder  
Bobbing on the tree,  
Scattering rich provender  
When...

Three hungry pigeons,  
Moved in upon the fray,  
Gulping down the falling seeds,  
The babies moved away,  
Then...

Mother bird gave a mighty 'croak'  
The pigeons hopped and fled,  
The baby birds, flapped feathered wings,  
Waiting to be fed.

***K E Brown***

## Silence

I'd like to get the choir to sing,  
Alas, there is no chance,  
The covid strain has interfered,  
Lead us a merry dance.

In silent rows, we sit in church,  
And keep our distance well,  
Our voices mute, behind our masks,  
What stories we could tell.

Music practice done alone,  
In broken consort now,  
Only 'Zoom' can break the gloom,  
Joining sounds as one.

Anticipation of better things,  
Keeps us upon our toes,  
We practice, garden, cook and live in hope,  
See what the future brings.

***K E Brown***

## CHURCH AND FACEBOOK SERVICES

There will continue to be a live service on our church Facebook page each Sunday at 10.00 am.– [St Mary and St Cuthbert Parish Church, Chester-le-Street.](#) Either streamed from the services in church or from a clergy house.

Please check page 2 also for other details with regard to our Church Services at 8.00 am, 10.00 am and 6.00 pm.

There are also video messages posted each week usually on Monday and Thursday.

There is usually a daily reflective photograph and prayer topics posted each day on our [St Mary and St Cuthbert Parish Church Congregations and Friends](#) Facebook page.

**Messy Church** is on our church Facebook page on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in the month with **Messy Mini Bytes** usually on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday.