

PARISH NEWS



SEPTEMBER 2020



CHURCH OF THE HOLY SAVIOUR, TYNEMOUTH
www.holysaviours.org.uk



Coronavirus COVID19

PUBLIC COLLECTIVE WORSHIP HAS RESUMED AT HOLY SAVIOURS: A LITURGY OF THE WORD IS HELD EACH SUNDAY AT 1000 AND 1130; AND SERVICES OF HOLY COMMUNION WILL BEGIN AGAIN ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13th – WATCH PARISH UPDATES FOR DETAILS.

For the moment, please note the following points:

- churchwardens and sides-people will welcome you into church, ask you to sanitise your hands and sign in [for the purposes of tracing contacts]
- you will be directed to your place in the marked-out pews
- we will be maintaining the 2 metre social distancing policy in church
- the church has been labelled with seating markers and pew numbers to make it easier to see where to sit
- once seated, please remain in your place until you are directed to leave
- after the service you will be directed to leave from the front, through the glass doors on to The Broadway, or from the back through the porch
- you should sanitise your hands on the way out
- the order of service will be on the screen; there will be no service books
- we will not be able to sing, but music will be included in the service
- we cannot offer tea, coffee or toilet facilities at present
- the church garden will be open after the service if you would like to chat with friends – but please observe social distancing
- a short video is available on the church website and youtube channel showing what you can expect when we meet for worship
- for those who feel uneasy about gathering indoors with a larger group, the services will be recorded and posted on youtube and the church website
- a small cleaning team will be needed to sanitise the church after each service; if you are willing to help with this, please let me know



THE VICAR WRITES.....

We cannot halt progress and the pace of change, but there are times when we wish we could. As I am a person who enjoys technology and technological advancements, it might surprise you to learn that I find it hard to cope when these changes impact on my personal routines. When my computer software automatically upgrades I moan - that suddenly nothing is where it used to be, everything looks different, and that I need to relearn how to perform even basic functions. It is very frustrating to have my usual

efficiency confiscated from me by a machine, especially as I didn't ask for the upgrade in the first place. My children are often exasperated by my 'old fashioned' ways around computer software and smart phones.

We all prefer to have set and predictable ways to do the practical things of life. None of us likes forced interruptions to our routines. So it is understandable that we find it difficult to adjust to simple changes, like remembering to carry a face mask in case we go into a shop or travel on the Metro.

It reminds me of the biblical story of the beginning of the Exodus. The people of Israel embarked on their journey into the wilderness after their release from Egypt - and they faced massive change. They had been an enslaved people who were told what to do by their masters and were now having to discover what it meant to be an independent nation. When practical problems arose about finding food and water they complained and longed to be back in the old country; better to be fed and watered under slavery, than to go hungry and thirsty in freedom.

We have had to adjust to enormous change over the last six months; and we are still in a situation where we know that change will continue to happen. All of us are trying to cope with very unsettling circumstances, and at very difficult moments it is very easy for us to look back to the way we were living. Dealing with constant and unpredictable change is exhausting and frustrating and we long to be out of the rapids and into calmer water. Looking again at the story of the exodus, we see that the people of Israel's physical needs got the better of them and they lost sight of their real purpose of becoming God's chosen people. The pressures of their new and frightening situation overcame their hope, faith and calling in God. We too are susceptible in a similar way.

I could never have imagined in my time in ministry that we would be facing so many new challenges. It has been difficult to focus on the real meaning of our worship and mission when there are so many new practical issues clamouring for

attention. Managing risk assessments and social distancing measures, providing signage and sanitising stations, arranging video recordings and updating the website have all demanded time and resources that would usually be spent on pastoral ministry and outreach. It is very easy in situations like this to lose sight of the end because of the need to concentrate so hard on the means.

When it all starts to feel like too much change I am reminded that the words of the Lord's Prayer are: *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.*

Jesus sets the priorities for our lives as he invites us to pray these words together, and also counsels us to live one day at a time. God's kingdom and God's will are always transformational and bring change, and we pray for these before we ask for the resources to live. For this we need faith that God has given us all that we need to keep looking forward and outward in challenging and changing times.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve".

EDITORIAL

John Pearce writes: My years as a *Relate* counsellor taught me many important lessons; two of them are borne out by the remarkable times through which we are living. One: that there is no such thing as an ordinary person but, rather, an infinite number of extraordinary ones; and two, that nothing happens to you, no matter how sad, un-necessary, unfair or awful, from which it is not possible to learn something useful. It is a truism to say that the pandemic has changed our lives, probably forever, and perhaps the biggest change has been the renewed realisation that the forces of nature – forces we thought we had mastered, tamed and harnessed to our own uses – are much more powerful than we had imagined. More than that, they are more immediately poised to turn our world upside down than we could have conceived at the turn of the year in January. As an offshore island next to a large continent, in a temperate zone, with settled geology, the lurid excesses of nature – hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires – visit us rarely and to little permanent effect. Major natural disasters happen elsewhere, and to other people; and even the uncertainties, ravages, and losses of war are now, seventy five years on, passing beyond living memory. Now, all that looks like hubris; if it was, then COVID-19 has been our nemesis.

It is not my intention here to try to sum up the events of the last six months in the hope of drawing any intelligent conclusions about what they may mean in the long term. I don't know all the facts about what happened, why and when, and I don't

feel qualified to interpret even the ones I do know; but at the same time I want, if possible to start some trains of thought on the subject of change; change that we will have to accept; change that we can try to modify or re-direct; and, as the Alcoholics Anonymous prayer suggests, how we might set about knowing the difference between these possibilities. What changes may we see in society at large as we move, slowly and tentatively into a post-COVID world? I don't pretend that my ideas below are original or inevitable, but I hope that they may move readers to respond with their own ideas, or to refute, modify or develop mine.

In the first place – what I see as a positive change – I think that the forty-hour working week where employees travel daily to workplaces in towns and cities will die out; not in my lifetime, surely, but certainly in my middle-aged children's. The lockdown has shown us conclusively that a great deal of what is now done in offices can be done just as effectively at home and often more quickly. Should this mean the end of commuting as a daily chore, then so much the better. It was about fifteen years ago, sitting in a packed train at Clapham Junction bound for Waterloo, that I came to appreciate just how dreadful a start to a day's work commuting really can be. We travelled in a silence seemingly suffused with a kind of sullen hatred; it was as if a huge speech-bubble hung over everyone's heads in which appeared the words *"I wish to God this would stop"*. Well, now it can: not straight away, and not without massive adjustments to the way cities and towns work but, ultimately, to enormous economic, social and environmental benefit.

Allied to this change, and extending it, will be the accelerated move from premises-based to on-line retail shopping, which will also intensify and accelerate the change in our urban environment. The pandemic has seen many retail businesses having to choose between going on-line or going under, and this is a change which, once begun, I don't think can be reversed. Shops will close and be converted back into living accommodation [there is, after all, a huge and growing shortfall in affordable housing], retail parks will see less footfall and, crucially, less traffic. Both of these changes could combine to call in question the need for a five-day week in employment and education. And, if a large number of people are going to have more free time, what social effects is this likely to have? How, for example, do we set about giving people the chance to use newly acquired leisure constructively, to avoid nurturing a fresh generation of couch-potatoes?

I realise that, at the age of seventy-six, I will not need to adapt my own way of life, whatever may be left of it, by very much or for very long, which perhaps accounts for my relish for the idea. Nonetheless it seems to me to be crucial that these possibilities of change are embraced, fully and whole-heartedly, and that we learn from the lessons which have been, however tragically, taught us. These changes will entail enormous upheaval, and will need careful, detailed management over

years, perhaps decades. To mitigate the social, economic and emotional fallout we need a vastly better government than we have now: one which is purposeful, courageous and intelligent, capable of seeing round the first corner of history, concerned with more than spin, media-management and evading blame. An elected coalition incorporating talents of all political persuasions is our best hope.

What, finally, is the application of this to the Christian churches? For the first and only time in our lives we have had to live up to the sermon we have so often heard from our pulpits – that the Church is not its buildings but its people. We need to think, hard, long and creatively, on what we have found out about ourselves as a result, and follow through on the possible consequences of that thought process in practical terms. These consequences may involve grand strategy - does the Anglican Communion in the Tynemouth Deanery really need fifteen churches to meet the needs of fewer than three thousand parishioners? if not, where and how do we start to act on this proposition? is it possible to act on this proposition in the diocesan system as it now pertains? if not, then what does this suggest about diocesan structures? how might we replace them? And if – well, you get the idea.

Or perhaps these consequences may consist of minor tactics, for example, stripping out the pews from our own church to create a more flexible space for worship and other activities? moving worship away from Sundays to weekday evenings, combined with family social events? how might such moves feed into the priorities we have identified in the LYCIG programme? COVID 19 has forced change upon us: how can we now build creatively on that?

No-one should see any of the foregoing as frivolous, provocative or simple-minded – we face a hard row to hoe. But the fact is that, three quarters of a century after the Second World War ended, our national position is similar to what it was in 1945. We are beginning to emerge from a catastrophic and prolonged assault on a settled way of life; and a return to the *status quo ante*, though possible, would be the worst possible thing to do. We have the chance to build creatively on trends which were already visible in pre-COVID Britain to make our country a more civilised and equitable place to live in, just as Clement Atlee's Labour government began to do in 1945. And, as for our nation, then so for our church, both locally and nationally. The Church of England is at a hard, but possibly hopeful moment; the pandemic has enabled us to find out things about ourselves, how we work as a community and how we can put our Christianity into practice which we had never suspected. But – and this is crucial – *we only did this because we had no alternative*. If now all we do is to relapse into the relatively comfortable but ultimately numerically-dwindling position that we inhabited before, then it is far from clear how much longer we can – or should - go on as a church. The book of Ecclesiastes, chapter nine, verse ten, also refers.

Notes and News

Malcolm Soulsby writes: From June 15th this year I have been posting a daily video online of a different piece played by myself on the organ at Holy Saviour's. These can be found on the Holy Saviours Music Facebook page which you can find at this address: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1258753860854412>. I am also posting recordings on https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=malcolm%27s+365+challenge - which is the address of my YouTube page. The YouTube postings follow those on Facebook but a few weeks in arrears. I am planning to post a piece each day for one year with June 15th this year as the start date. Initially my idea was to give myself a goal to maintain my practice schedule to a performance standard, but it has occurred to me since to turn this into a fund-raising scheme. Hence the **Malcolm Soulsby 365 Challenge** which will see my producing a recording a day for the next day, back-dating from June 15th last to June 15th 2021. If you would like to sponsor me, then watch out for details of how to do this on the church website and also in next month's *Parish News*. I will be happy to take requests for special occasions, or for particular favourites, with the proviso that [a] I can get hold of a workable organ arrangement [b] it is playable and [c] you pay a suitable fee. More information about this fund-raising enterprise soon. In the meantime, if you would like to catch up with the forty-six recordings posted so far, please look at my Facebook page.



Editor's note: This paragraph is being written to the accompaniment of Malcom's performance of C H H Parry's *Meditation on Rockingham* ["*When I survey the wondrous cross*"] played with Malcolm's usual style, musicianship and precision. I look forward to the rest of this editing day being spent in his musical company and that of a group of his favourite composers – Karg-Elert, Healey Willan, J S Bach, Percy Whitlock, Gordon Jacob, Rheinberger, Herbert Howells.....a wonderful piece of enterprise from our beloved church musician. My list of requests and a cheque will be on the way soon, Malcolm.....

The Editor writes: for this month's cover picture my thanks go to Mr Lukáš Vaňátko, who lives in Liberec, a city in the Czech Republic which, by virtue of its thriving textiles industry, was once known as the Manchester of Bohemia. Mr Vanatko's striking photograph of the recent Neowise comet in the skies over his home town [uploaded to www.unsplash.com], set off a lengthy train of thought.

Comet Neowise visits our solar system every 6,800 years, which means that the last human eyes to see it belonged to cultures beginning to emerge from the Neolithic era. In the year 4,780 BC, between 5 and 20 million people lived on Earth; there had been rapid population growth throughout the late Stone Age, but we cannot be certain of how large that growth had been. A gradual transition from a nomadic way of life had begun, and settlements recognisable as villages, towns and cities were emerging. In Europe, a single spoken language – Proto-Indo-European – had spread across the continent, but left no written records.

The most advanced civilisations were Chinese – three widespread cultures had domesticated the pig, cultivated rice and millet, and pioneering the firing of pottery. To the south and west, North African populations had domesticated the horse and the chicken and were learning to use simple machines like the potters' wheel. On the other side of the world, Aboriginal populations in Australasia were recording their way of life in rock-carvings which still survive in the cave systems of New South Wales.

For many European Christians, until at least the mid-nineteenth century, the 5th Millennium BC was also notable for containing the moment when, according to Archbishop Ussher, God wrote the first chapters of the book of Genesis. On the afternoon of October 22nd at 1800, [or the morning of the 23rd at 0900 depending on whether you use the Jewish or Christian calendars], God created the earth and the heavens and all that therein is. If this really had been the case, then Comet Neowise would have looked down on a world which was very much more a work in progress than Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace would later have had us believe. Another striking photograph of its visit which I saw in the *Metro* newspaper was of the comet in the night sky above Stonehenge – the building of which was, in 4780 BC, well over fifteen hundred years in the future.

The late-Stone-Age human beings who looked up at Comet Neowise were beginning to domesticate the natural world but knew, experientially, that this was and would be a long and bitter business. In our own times the natural world has reminded us, powerfully and ungainsayably, that our powers of domestication are a great deal more limited than perhaps we had thought. Seven thousand years of what we think of as progress has seen us use, manipulate and exploit the natural world in ways that Stone Age humankind would have seen as sorcery: but it is

arrogant and proud of us to suppose, as many do, that we have conquered it. As our Prime Minister discovered in condign fashion after his recent encounter with the corona virus, *naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret*¹

On its recent visit, Comet Neowise was visible to a world population of eight billion, many of whom belong to a civilisation which our culture describes as advanced. When it next visits our solar system, in 8820 AD, over what kind of world will it pass? The mind boggles at what a further seven centuries of technological progress may bring, bearing in mind the late Arthur C Clarke's dictum that *"any sufficiently advanced technology cannot be distinguished from magic"*. On the other hand, it is not all that long ago that humankind saw comets as harbingers of doom, a superstition which we have, for the most part, outgrown. At the same time, it is hard to escape the notion, niggling away at the back of the mind, that perhaps Comet Neowise may be telling us to beware of getting too big for our boots, of thinking that there is nothing that nature can throw at us which we cannot field safely, that our frail flesh is somehow pitchfork-proof. It isn't.

Correspondence

The Editor writes: Attentive *Parish News* readers may recall that my July/August editorial suggested that Archbishop Justin Welby could find better uses for his time than to initiate a nationwide cull of church ornaments lest someone should be offended by a tactless statue or a tasteless wall-plaque. My article ended with the following brusque challenge from a *Times* reader. Mr George Watts, who addressed the archbishop as follows: *"Most of our great cathedrals were built by forced labour. Most are embellished by heroes of colonial wars. Many of the charities and almshouses were funded by oppressors of the poor, or by tormented aristocrats seeking penance for their sins. Do the job properly, pull the holy places down. Sell up and give the money to the victims of war and pestilence that goes hand in hand with de-colonisation. You will find you are archbishop of no one. Then flog off your robes and walk to the Pearly Gates in sack cloth"*. On the basis that shy bairns get nowt I sent a copy of the whole editorial to Justin Welby, largely to see what would happen next. The following reply, written on his behalf by Mary Smalley, his Correspondence Officer, is printed in full; common courtesy suggests that I refrain from further comment.

Dear Mr Pearce, Thank you for your recent letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Much as he would wish, he is sadly unable to respond personally or in detail to each of the many emails and letters he receives, so I have been asked to reply on his behalf. May I begin by apologising for the delay in responding to your letter.

¹ *You may expel nature with a pitchfork, yet constantly she will be running back.*

Thank you for the comments and observations you shared in your letter, and indeed your included article. I recognise the sentiments that prompted you to write and understand the breadth of opinion and the strong feelings that these issues have and will continue to raise.

The Archbishop's role in public life is one of the key responsibilities of the position he holds, focused around key issues such as how Christians and others can make a difference in their local communities and to the society we live in as a nation and exploring what Christianity has to say about the big questions we all face. Speaking out on issues that affect people and the life of the nation is a vital part of his role and his ministry.

Whilst during his interview for the *Today* programme on Radio 4, the Archbishop did indicate that some statues [eg funerary monuments, rather than depictions of Jesus and the saints] may be altered or removed, yet he also explained in no uncertain terms that the priority was to properly contextualise and learn from these monuments to the past, in order than we move forward in mutual understanding, justice and forgiveness. Any process of altering or removing monuments would of course involve engaging with academics, historians and others, including subject-matter specialists and Minority Ethnic community leaders, to ensure that multiple voices are listened to and inform decisions about the interpretation of artwork and its future within our buildings.

I wish to assure you that responding to these wider issues in an active and meaningful way is a priority for the Archbishop and those who support his ministry. Those of us who are white Christians, committed to seeking the love and justice of God for all his children, must commit to challenging the systems and beliefs that may benefit us, but which negatively and disproportionately impact our black and ethnic minority brothers and sisters.

On 24th June, it was announced that the House of Bishops has voted the back the creation of the Archbishops' Racism Action Commission to start work early next year in order to implement significant cultural and structural change within the Church of England on race. The bishops have emphasised that swift action was needed to ensure change: *'For the church to be a credible voice in calling for change across the world, we must now ensure that apologies and lament are accompanied by swift actions leading to real change'*.

Furthermore, the Church, alongside other organisations is now actively working to educate and on slavery, and eradicate all forms of slavery in its many modern manifestations. You can see more about the Clewer initiative by visiting this website: <https://www.theclewerinitiative.org/>.

Thank you again for taking the time to write and share your thoughts and concerns. The contribution of Christians, ordained and lay is vital to the life of the Church and as such the Archbishop is grateful to those who write to him.

Please be assured of our prayers and good wishes for all in the church community.

Yours sincerely, Mary Smalley.

Editor's note: *I found the following letter in the "Intercessor's Pew" on Sunday August 2nd. Although it was unsigned, and although I don't usually accept anonymous contributions, I changed my mind as soon as I had read it. Whatever who wrote it intended to convey, it comes across to me as a beautifully-wrought prose poem celebrating the opportunity the pandemic has given us to approach God in worship in new and different ways. The layout I have used below is my own interpretation of what [I hope] the writer of this piece wanted to emphasis – I hope I have got it right. At all events, my heartfelt thanks go to whoever wrote these simple, powerful and moving words.*

Returning

When we were allowed back,
When we were allowed to sit,
allowed to stand,
to respond to prayers from a Communion service,
- but not permitted to sip his blood
or place our body on our tongues,
or sing his praises,
I thought I'd hate to attend a silent hour.

Instead, I found it liberating in thought and word.
Songs are not delivered with ease from my willing vocal cords.
I'm unable to reach the high notes needed for hymns.
Halleluia, I can now mime the words on a screen.

The beast has changed our ways, still lingers,
And although I pray it gone,
I want the quiet of this newness to remain within me,
Throughout the years to come.

Editor's Note: *We are lucky, at Holy Saviour's, to have three clergy whose preaching never fails to challenge us and to make us think. Canon Joan Dotchin, on 25th July, challenged us to answer Christ's question "Whom say ye that I am?" Apart from helping me to decide the subject of the October Parish News editorial [thanks Joan] her challenge has also produced three very different contributions for our further thought. Who runs may read.*

Anna Isaac writes: I had this question 'Who is Jesus for you?' asked before by a catechist when I was about twelve years of age. Like the other children in the group I was given a piece of paper and half an hour to write about it. I remember staring at the blank page before me and trying hard to think of something, but all I could come up with were some solemn statements that I knew from church services, such as '*Jesus is my saviour*', which – however true – didn't seem good and lengthy enough.

Midway upon the journey of my life, where I am today, I am capable of covering more than one page on the subject, since writing about somebody who is close and dear does not pose a particular problem; the only difficulty for me being that it is very personal. Instead of trying to add something new and original to the long list of names Jesus is called in the scriptures, I would rather describe briefly what 'following Jesus' means to me.

First of all, it is real. I used to think it was a figure of speech that preachers like to repeat in order to make us try to be better people, but – as with many things written in the Bible that we struggle with – perhaps it should not be taken too literally. But if I take my Christianity seriously and truth is something I hold dear, it will lead me to the point of realisation that following Jesus is the only way: otherwise I will generate my own version of truth. He is the Truth, as he said himself. I cannot be a truth-seeker without him.

I started early, without being fully aware at the time what I was doing. I remember one occasion when as a teenager I opposed my fellow teenage girls engaged in habitual girlish gossiping and spreading false rumours about others. It does not seem like much now, but at this sensitive age separating yourself from the pack and risking rejection was the last thing anyone would want to bring upon themselves. I don't think my desire to be truthful would have been so strong if Jesus had not been somebody I admired. By the way, nobody rejected me.

The hardest part about following the truth is what it makes me discover about myself. And I don't mean by this obvious things, like my flaws or trespasses, but a kind of spiritual complacency, which is a more sophisticated trap to fall into. Example: whenever I am kind to other people only because I want them to be kind

to me, the right term for that is an 'indirect self-interest' not a 'love of my neighbour' as I would like to think. Even though there is nothing wrong with that - after all the whole of society operates on similar principles - if I genuinely follow the Truth, I know that love is not self-seeking. Without Jesus I would not even be able to tell the difference.

And what about those who do not respect me, who undermine my beliefs, belittle my achievements, who try to use me, manipulate me or say untrue things about me. Loving them, as encouraged by Jesus, seems too heroic to be feasible at the stage of my journey where I am now, but as a Christian I should at least make an effort to overcome the natural reflex to hate. Again, without Jesus's guidance I am quite powerless against this force. I can try to ignore it, bottle it up, act like I am above it, or – if I am aware of mental health issues – I can apply some psychological methods of managing bad emotions, which essentially means re-directing my attention, but it will not make me truly free from it.

I would like to finish with what is for me the most important aspect of following Jesus from my current perspective, i.e. my relationship with God. It grows together with my walking along this path and observing how the actions I take, and the efforts I make, bring reactions from the Almighty, which in itself is a marvellous process. In the past praying was hard, like trying to commune with some distant absolute power; now is like talking to my good Father whom I love and trust. Before I only knew about Him, now I know Him. And whenever I hear people questioning God's goodness and love for us, even if I am not theologically prepared to have a proper dispute with them, I know that what they say is not true. Without this intimate bond evolving over the years I would probably have quitted long time ago as most people of my generation did. For in our modern comfort-seeking culture – with our comfort foods and our comfort zones – there is no room for the Truth, which by its nature always makes one feel a little uncomfortable.

Claire Dixon writes: *"So what? some bloke died".....*you may have heard that from a non-Christian friend when you have tried to explain your faith. Many people do indeed die for the sake of others, we only have to think of the ongoing crisis of the pandemic to know that people have died just doing their job, whether it be a member of a medical team, a bus driver or a loved teacher. But the bloke I am talking about is Jesus. So when Steve asked us to write a few words about what Jesus meant to us, I felt challenged to write something (a step which is a little out of character for me I have to admit).

I first met this bloke, Jesus, in my early teens attending a Church Youth group in Ashington. We had a visiting speaker called Sonny Arguinzoni, an ex-gang member

from the United States. For those old enough to remember, he was an associate of Nicky Cruz, who wrote his autobiography *'Run Baby Run'*, which was later turned into the film *'The Cross and the Switchblade'*. We all sat and listened to how lives had been changed from stories of drugs and crime to ones of peace and calm. Following a call for people to come forward for prayer I found myself making my way to the front of the meeting hall to be the first in line.

From that day Jesus has been a constant companion. He has been with me even when I tried to ignore him and do my own thing at University - all my new friends were Christians, what a coincidence.....

He was there when I met and married Steve. He was there at the launch into the great unknown in the year 2000 when we sold up our house and took the plunge into training for ministry; and I say **we**, because being a partner of Church Army Officer/Ordained Priest is a full time job.

He was there when I lost two babies in early pregnancy. He was there when my Dad died suddenly at the age of 63. He was there when I held my Mam's hand as she took her last breath. He was there at the joyous birth of our two children and the happy times we have shared over the years.

Jesus will never leave you behind as a hopeless case and move on to the next person.

Okay, so some bloke died. However, he did rise again, and by accepting that fact I can live a life assured that I am accepted and forgiven. So thank God he did.

And finally [for this month at any rate] Sheila Park sums up:

Joan asked us at the end of her sermon on Sunday July 25th to reply to Christ's question *"Who do you say that I am?"*

I say: "the Saviour of us all".

Editor's note: My thanks to Anna, Claire and Sheila for these contributions. What is striking is how different – in tone, approach and style – they all are, but how forcefully they all embody a truth about Jesus and the way he inhabits our lives. It was only in the 1860s that the German scholar David Strauss pioneered the study of Jesus as a personality, a study reflected in the acceptance by mainstream Christians that belief in God also involved some sort of personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The late Alan Brien, reviewing *A life of Christ* by the late Lord Longford in 1974, observed that *"there are no less than sixty thousand Lives of Jesus. And still they come. I doubt whether the most devoted student in a school of divinity would be familiar with a hundredth of them. But those I have read, perhaps a score, have one striking quality in common — they are all one*

type. Like Hamlet, Jesus is continually recast in image of his commentator — or, perhaps more often, the image his commentator would like to project of himself”. Myself, I think this to be an unnecessarily cynical view, but it does, in a way, emphasise the way in which the person of Christ meets the spiritual and emotional needs of an infinite variety of individuals, God made Man.

“Whom say ye that I am” – answers, please, to the Parish News mailbox in the Parish Centre, or to JCPrintmail@gmx.co.uk or to 9 Selwyn Avenue, Monkseaton, NE25 9DH by WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 23rd for inclusion in October’s Parish News.

CHANGES

Editor's Note: *Before the family decamped for a week to a holiday let in Melrose for a change of scene and pace, I wrote to everyone who has had any kind of an active connection with the Parish News at some point in the last three years, inviting contributions on the theme of Change. Beyond that I offered no guidance at all as to approach, style, topic or emphasis. I have tried to make my own views clear in my editorial, and I hope that readers will, as I was, be interested to read other takes on the matter.*

Firstly, Rob Blake, who sent me this photograph of the latest change to the RNLI’s PPE outfit: he wonders, as do I, how these masks will wear when subject to a choppy North Sea.



Rob also reminds us of how In 1971 the English artist David Bowie wrote a song called Changes². It became one of his best known songs, reflecting his personality, music and the world. I thought these lyrics from the song are very apt now and wonder how many people have had similar reflections in the last few months?

Ch-ch-changes
(Turn and face the strange)
Ch-ch-changes
(Don't want to be a richer man)
Ch-ch-changes
(Turn and face the strange)
Ch-ch-changes
(Just gonna have to be a different man)
Time may change me
But I can't trace time

Editor's Note: *For years I have felt that there was a great less in David Bowie than met the eye. By a happy chance **Claire Dixon** [unaware as far as I know of Rob's contribution above] has sent the reflection below on "Changes".*

The lyrics for Changes, written and performed by David Bowie, include the lines:

*Time may change me
But I can't trace time*

For years I have been mis-hearing the words naturally assuming that the last line read "*change time*". So now the conundrum: what does *trace* mean in this context. Checking various online forums of Bowie fans didn't bring any conclusive answers, but one I particularly liked was that Bowie was looking back on the people he had met, the places he had been and of experiences along the way. Further lyrics include:

*Ch-ch-changes
Turn and face the strange*

This time of lockdown has certainly brought about changes in everyone's lives – in the early days not being able to see loved ones, only going out on essential shopping trips, social distancing, wearing face coverings, watching Church services on Youtube, listening to services broadcast on the radio or dialling up the Church of England Daily Prayer line. We can all think of ways Coronavirus has impacted

² Changes lyrics © Chrysalis Music Ltd., Tintoretto Music, Chrysalis Music Ltd, Rzo Music Ltd

our everyday life. We have had to “turn and face the strange” whether we have agreed with Government policies or not.

Take a moment to “trace time” over the past few months; how have you impacted on a friend/neighbour/stranger? Wearing a face covering is one way we can show our love and concern for others. It’s not about selfish prevention of the wearer catching Covid 19, it is about concern for our fellow worshippers/shoppers/key workers. My mother suffered with Chronic Lung disease all of her adult life as a result of damage to her lungs caused by the Measles virus she had contracted as a child not once but twice; the coronavirus appears to be much more damaging and the long term affects far worse. Therefore, let us all spare a thought for those around us. Matthew chapter 7 verse 12 says: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets”. Recall also the words of Jesus in Mark chapter 12 verse 31: “Love your neighbours, as you love yourself”.

The wearing of a simple face covering will also mean that the people of Holy Saviours will be able to take Communion for the first time since March. Come to the Lord’s Table and be grateful that we can meet together and for all that he has done to help us through these strange times. Roll on the days when we can sing again:

³You give life, You are love;
You bring light to the darkness;
You give hope,
You restore every heart that is broken;
Great are You, Lord.
It's Your breath in our lungs,
so we pour out our praise to you only.

Revd Timothy Duff writes:

The changing scenes of life: a mixed bag of reflections on VJ Day 2020

Kate Footer - Miss Footer as we all called her - was a slight lady, the retired housekeeper of a Bishop, a very faithful worshipper at Holy Saviour's, who lived fairly frugally but very cheerfully on not much money. I always think of her when the hymn *Through all the changing scenes of life* is sung. She died about forty years ago, and at her request we sang that hymn at her funeral. The first verse typifies her outlook and her faith:

³ Lyrics to “Great are you, Lord”, copyright David Leonard, Jason Ingram, Leslie Jordan.

*Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ*

For all of us, there have been plenty of “changing scenes of life” since mid-March, with no certainty of how long the virus will be around, probably the only certainty being that some of the 'new normal' will remain as continuing parts of our life. I have found it rather an unsettling time, a restless time, bringing both trouble and joy. Miss Footer's hymn came back to sustain me, as did some words of St. Augustine 'Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you' which form the basis of this beautiful and helpful prayer:

*Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts
are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our
hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your
heavenly city where we shall see you face to face.*

There are, I feel, three essential **H's** for us just now: first, our **H**earts finding their rest in God; but also **H**ygience - yes, I have sanitised my hands before typing this - and also **H**umour (see later for the Humour).

I am writing this on 15th August, which was VJ Day 75 years ago. At 1100 my wife Patricia and I lowered the flag to half-mast in Percy Gardens and looked over a peaceful scene and out to sea. That brought to mind a Second World War cemetery we visited some years ago in the Far East, immediately after seeing the actual Bridge on the River Kwai. Like all such cemeteries, it was beautifully maintained, and equally peaceful. The graves were of British and Dutch soldiers, almost all of whom had been prisoners of war, dying from disease, malnutrition and the like. Poignantly, one grave we chanced on was that of a soldier who had died the day my wife was born. As our group left the cemetery to walk back to our air-conditioned coach, we were given cold face-cloths and iced bottles of water to cool us down. What a contrast to the conditions suffered by those prisoners of war. How important it is to work for and preserve peace.

The flag I lowered to half-mast on August 15th reflected among other things an interest in flags which has endured for over fifty years. For a long time I considered I was giving harmless pleasure and interest to myself and the neighbourhood by flying them. But then I discovered that not everyone holds that view. When our daughter, now the Revd. Emma Duff, went away to University at St. Andrews she happened to fall into conversation, quite by chance, with a fellow-student, and it turned out that he lived in North Shields. She assures me that the conversation then went as follows:

Emma: I live in Tynemouth, in The Drive.

Fellow student: Oh, I often walk down The Drive on my way to the beach.

Emma: Then you'll know our house. It's where the road divides, it has a flagpole in the garden.

Fellow Student [taking a step back, his jaw dropping]: You're not connected to that nutter who's always flying the foreign flags, are you?

Ah well, I thought, you can't please them all. A mixed bag; I offer it to the readers of Parish News.

David Littlefield writes:

Changes in Childhood

During the 1950s Dickie Dowden taught the top class at Priory School. He once caned me for talking during a spelling test – an event I did not disclose at home as I could predict the reaction – but he did prepare me well for the 11-plus exam. Once that January hurdle was over matters in the classroom somewhat relaxed and Mr Dowden read to us – a lot. He certainly changed my literary landscape which until then had been rather confined to the *Famous Five*.

We each learnt a verse from '*Grays Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*' which sixty years later is still a firm favourite. I especially enjoyed Mr Dowden's reading of '*Moonfleet*'-an exciting smuggling yarn by J. Meade Falkner. I can still hear his voice as the revenue men descended on a tiny coastal village and we enjoyed the thrill of diamonds hidden down a well.

My next major hurdles were O levels after which our beloved Senior Scout Master, Alan Smythe, had promised ten of us a camping trip to Scotland. We travelled north in a battered former ambulance and pitched tents on the shores of beautiful Loch Morlich in the Cairngorms.

The next day Alan went abseiling and fell to his death. Our teenage idyll was interrupted by policemen and anxious parents. Suddenly we all had to grow up and, as we were driven home through the dark of a summer night, it was as if the door of childhood had closed behind me forever.

BIBLICAL WORDS [IV]:

Who do people say that I am?'

Clive Harper writes: These words of Jesus were spoken at a place called Caesarea Philippi, an ancient city located in the Golan heights in the north of Israel, at the foot of Mount Hermon. Jesus had travelled there with His disciples (see Chapter 16 of St Matthew's Gospel] and it was there that he asked the

question: 'who do people say that I am?' Some would say that upon the answer to this question hangs our Eternal Destiny; certainly, it can be seen to be the doorway into the Christian faith, the confession of the standing of Christ in our lives. Who do I, who do we say that Jesus is?

The likelihood is that Jesus deliberately chose this place to ask the question; He was a man with a mission; always listening to His heavenly Father for the next step; so now, it seems, was the time to know how His message was being received in the country.

And He would know the history of Israel; is that why He chose Caesarea Philippi, because it was there that the great god Pan of Greek mythology had his seat; it was there that King Herod built a temple of white marble for the Emperor of Rome. Jesus appeared to be staking His claim of Kingship, challenging the powers and kingdoms of this world.

But it was important that He heard the answer given by Peter: "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God" because, from that moment, Jesus seems to set His face towards Jerusalem, and His crucifixion.

St. Peter had been given the spiritual insight to make the great confession; from that moment Jesus seemed to know that His ministry had born fruit. It was one of those crucial staging posts in His life which Jesus had been called upon to lead; the life that led inexorably to the Cross and our salvation. He had laid down the foundation stone of His Church and He could now safely hand over the building work to His disciples, inspired by the work of the Holy Spirit. When I visited the site some years ago it was so fresh and sparkling that I felt I had somehow strayed into the Garden of Eden. Today it is a nature reserve, with a spring and a waterfall, a most fitting place for the foundation of a new beginning.

STRIPPING FOR ACTION: STARTING A DISCUSSION [II]

The Editor writes: If you think that you have read what follows before, then you are right; it appeared in the July/August edition in the hope of starting a discussion. In that aim it was a relative failure; I have had only two responses [see below] for which I thank Sheila Park and Ian Buxton respectively. At the same time I cannot help thinking that there could be more to be said on the matter; hence this second publication of the original, with some additional material which I hope may energise one or two more people to put their views in writing.

Readers may find it hard to believe that I rarely write anything in these pages which is expressly aimed at starting an argument. For the most part I write to find out what I think myself, and if this enables others to do the same, then that is

enough for me. This piece, on the other hand, is expressly designed to start a discussion, and was prompted by the two photographs Steve sent me with his article. In preparing to re-open the church, he has had to strip out these one hundred and fifty-four kneelers and fifty-odd mats – soft furnishings which, for the moment, we don't need. Public worship for the foreseeable future will have to be based on this austere policy, using not all the things we think we can do with, but only, rather, the things that we can't do without.

This set me thinking about other things we could perhaps do without, which led me to think about the stripping out of our pews – which could transform our church into a much more versatile open space and, possibly, realise us some useful money at the same time. Such a policy has been discussed off and on, for over thirty years; it was, to my certain knowledge, a private ambition of two of our vicars [never ask me who]. If past experience is anything to go by, the notion of removing the pews will arouse views ranging from *over my dead body* to *about time too*; and this little article is designed to start such a discussion. That I am in favour of taking out the pews is neither here nor there – I speak only for myself and expect no-one else to listen. But what does anyone else think? And, whatever they think, would they please write their views down and send them to me in time for the October *Parish News* please? All being well this will be the second edition to have appeared both in print and online since the lockdown began, and it would be good to continue print publication with a vigorous and civil discussion on a matter that concerns us all.

For the moment, again my thanks to Sheila and Ian for writing in.

Sheila Park writes: Pews or chairs? I personally have always preferred pews. I know that ours at Holy Saviour's are dark and a bit unwelcoming. Chairs generally look more inviting and are usually more comfortable. But pews I find more convenient as you spread all the bits of paper, books etc that you usually collect at church. Now that we are having to clean all surfaces after a service they are a real boon. The smooth wood is satisfactorily cleaned with a damp disinfected cloth whilst material surfaces like cloth or velvet will be a headache at this time. Two local churches haven't opened yet; both have soft material seats – could this be one of their problems?

Ian Buxton writes: A few thoughts about the possibility of removing pews at Holy Saviours. I supported the removal of the wooden choir stalls in the chancel because they had outlived their usefulness – too narrow and no regular choir – and because it provided a more flexible space close to the altar. While removing the wooden pews from the nave would open up the space, do we really need it? We already have the Parish Centre and Parish Hall for events needing space

flexibility. Removal of the pews would be irreversible; once disposed of, it would cost a fortune today to rebuild them. We have managed social distancing with the present pews. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

A case study: the church of St Edburg, Bicester

Editor's note: the article below is based on a story printed in the *Oxford Mail* on February 28th this year. The Church of St Edburg, Bicester, is a church which, so far as I can see, is not dissimilar to Holy Saviour's in churchmanship, outreach and congregational make up; the only difference [and it is a major one] is that it is a sixteenth century foundation and a Grade 1 listed building – ie, one of six thousand buildings in the UK judged to have architectural value of national significance. The decision to remove the pews and re-order the nave was taken last year, and work was due to begin on March 1st 2020. For obvious reasons, this work was delayed but, remarkably, has been completed in time for the church's re-opening a month ago. If you would like to know more, then please google St Edburg, Bicester to see the church's website; in particular, you may find interesting the 'before' and 'after' photographs of the building, which is a strikingly beautiful one.

As I made clear last month, my own preference would be to remove the pews at Holy Saviour's, but I am not concerned to argue a case for doing that here [nor, come to that, am I self-important enough to think that anyone would take the slightest notice if I did]. But, reading the story in the *Oxford Mail* and the below the line comments which accompanied it, I concluded that taken together they made up a more or less complete case for and against the idea. In compiling this article, I have added no editorial comment whatsoever – every quotation is verbatim whether from the main story or the comments below it. All individuals quoted have been anonymised for copyright and data protection reasons, with only minimal descriptions where these are helpful. That said, please believe me that I have altered nothing which affects the force of an expressed opinions.

A 52-year-old woman, identified as a former pupil of the attached St Edburg's School who has attended the church, said: *I think it's disgraceful. I have seen friends and family christened, married and buried there. It's a place of worship and not a church hall. The pew is a place of reflection and where we consider those who have sat there before us and the joy, sadness and celebration is almost tangible. The scraping of chairs is not conducive to this process and does not reflect the true nature of a place of worship. If a church hall is needed then I am sure that would get support, but this act is sacrilege of the highest order.*

A female contributor to the church's Facebook page said: *A church should have pews. The character completely changes when they are removed and replaced with chairs."*

Another woman commented: *Such a shame to hear that the pews will be replaced by chairs and take away one of the traditional elements from such a lovely church.*

An anonymous man commented: *The church, as with everything else, has to move with the times. Tradition is not the reason people attend church. By moving on it enables the church to not just survive but flourish as a community building as well as a venue for worship. Very few fixtures and fittings make a jot of difference to the ambiance of a church - it's the people therein who bring it alive.*

An anonymous woman commented: *While I love pews and the look (and warmth of the wood) that they bring, it is a fact that the church needs to be adaptable to allow the current and future generations' Christians and non-Christians access to it. It is still a lovely Church.*

Some of the below-the-line remarks are also illuminating, not least the ones from the anonymous posters who don't trouble to pull their punches. I have invented new pseudonyms for these commenters to "double-lock" their data protection.

Ewert Blue wrote: *Spending £58,728 on new chairs when foodbank usage is increasing isn't hypocrisy... Course not. They're spreading the finest 'good news' in the land! Change them quick before anyone petitions to have them house homeless people: you can't do that with chairs. Hypocrites of the highest order.*

Bangers and mash wrote: *Evangelical Christians are architectural barbarians with no respect for their buildings or history. Many of the central Oxford churches have been wrecked in a similar way.*

Queen Laugh agreed: *Spot on. I couldn't give a monkey's about God or worship, but love our country's architectural heritage. The church needs to recognise that it's a custodian of this heritage.*

Borlotti responded: *The church's core business isn't heritage. If people want heritage, they need to find a way to pay for it. Yes, the church is rich blah blah blah. Most of the riches are tied up in Grade 1 listed buildings. And if you care about churches try parking your bottom on a pew on Sundays and then you would have a right to comment.*

McMotormouth made a more general point: *Oh good! there is no need for fairy tales in this day and age.*

This day and age, though, cuts little ice with **Jack's Master:** *Why all the excitement about Victorian pews? Churches and cathedrals have been evolving for 1000 years.*

What next, reinstate the rood screens and doom paintings? Take out the sound system and bring back gas lamps?

Which didn't go far enough for **Can't be chewed**: *Gas? Gas! We'll have none of that new-fangled stuff in the church I don't go to, thanks very much! Candles are perfectly acceptable! Whatever's the matter with you? You'll be asking for heating next!*

Can't be chewed also developed the church-attending point: *Go to church? Oh no; I don't do that; it's not relevant to me. But of course I demand the right to tell those who do go what they should be doing and how they should worship. Christianity is dangerous.... keep it irrelevant and redolent of 150 years ago... that way it's safe.*

But it was a conservative evangelical who demonstrated the force of modern Christian charity going at full blast in the shape of **SarahSnow**: *Female priests are a sure sign that a church no longer believes or teaches what the Bible says. In God's eyes, women and men are equal, but not identical. Men and women have their own unique roles to play within Christian worship. The beauty and strength of what Christianity stands for and teaches, is that it does not pander to the whims and fads of the modern world. The female priest at St Edburg's said that they were really excited about how their church is growing and changing to meet the needs of our community. What is this female priest going to implement at the church next - the hosting of a Drag Queen Story Time and Islamic prayers? No wonder Christians are leaving Anglican churches in their droves in favour of Bible-believing worship. A church should not "move with the times", its role is not to give people positive vibes, good feelings, and unconditional acceptance. It's not a space to host community events, it's a space to hold people accountable to God's Word. This is what ensures it will survive and flourish.*

Which was a view endorsed by Innominatus: *Couldn't agree more, SarahSnow. I remember someone saying that Christ's message was 'Feed my sheep', not 'Entertain my goats'.*

All of which shows that, if we do take this discussion forward, we will need to work hard to stay focused on our paramount consideration – our mission as the people of Christ, and how best we may serve it. The other point which emerges from this is the need for a church to stay focused in the face of interference from people who rarely or never use our church, but claim the right to tell us how to order our affairs. The church has many functions, and the least of them is to adorn our suburban landscape and provide a seemingly ambience for rites of family passage – baptisms, weddings and funerals. But if that is all that we consider our mission to be, then the sooner we will find that we end up doing nothing else.

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With the easing of the lockdown, Sunday worship will resume at 1000 and 1130 on Sunday, July 5th. This will be a Service of the Word with no hymn-singing, [although there will be some appropriate music at various points throughout the service]. It is intended that we work towards a service of Holy Communion as time moves on. The 1000 service will be repeated at 1130 if necessary, so that we can manage our numbers in view of the need to maintain social distancing for the time being. Attendance will be "first come, first served", so if you cannot be admitted at 1000, you will be admitted at 1130. Each service will last 40 minutes, with the interval between them being given over to cleaning the church in time for the second service. Parishioners who do not feel ready to join a large gathering for the moment will be able to join in the youtube transmission on the church website at www.holysaviours.org.uk. It is currently intended that these transmissions will continue indefinitely.

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 0191 697 4562

Curate **Revd. Malcolm Railton**
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 Tel. 2580270

PCC Vice Chairman:
 Chris Benneworth

PCC Treasurer:
 Karen Bilton, 19 Ashleigh Grove
 Tel. 2580270

Church Flowers:
 Sheila Park, 15 Ashleigh Grove,
 Tel. 257 5481
 Barbara Walker, 2 Monkstone Crescent,
 Tel. 257 4159

Activities

Mothers' Union

1st Monday 2.00pm Parish Centre
 3rd Thursday 2.00pm Parish Centre
 Cathy Duff Tel 0191 257 4811

W3 – Women's Group

1st Wednesday 7.30pm Parish Centre
 Debbie Baird Tel. 296 1663

Rainbows

Lucy Skillen Tel. 07891101262

Brownies

Pat Corbett Tel. 0191 2800510

Guides

Grace Paul Tel. 07803371929

Rangers

Grace Paul Tel. 07803371929

Beavers

Gillian Smith Tel. 296 1426
tynemouthbeavers@gmail.com

Cub Scouts

Fiona Lydall Tel 257 3047

Scouts

David Littlefield Tel. 257 8740

Explorer Scouts

Lucy Mace Tel. 258 5948

Group Scout Leader

Michael Dyer Tel. 2596236

Asst. Group Leader

David Littlefield Tel. 257 8740

Scout Hut bookings:

Helen Preston Tel: 257 0574

Tynemouth Village Day Centre – Parish Hall

Tel. 259 5569

Mother & Toddler Group – Parish Hall

Friday 9.30am

ARTICLES FOR THE PARISH NEWS

These should be submitted to the editor, **John Pearce**, at JCPrintmail@gmx.co.uk – the deadline will be published each month. Post written contributions in the Parish News Mailbox outside the Parish Office or to 9 Selwyn Avenue, Monkseaton, NE25 9DH.

All queries to

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