

PARISH NEWS



FEBRUARY 2021

"Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true,
that even as we grieved, we grew,
that even as we hurt, we hoped,
that even as we tired, we tried,
that we'll forever be tied together,
victorious.....

When day comes we step out of the shade,
aflame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it."

Extracted from *The Hill We Climb*,
a poem recited at the Inauguration of Joseph Robinette Biden
46th President of the United States of America by Amanda Gorman,
Youth Poet Laureate of America, January 20th 2021

CHURCH OF THE HOLY SAVIOUR, TYNEMOUTH

www.holysaviours.org.uk

February at Holy Saviours

[correct at the time of publication on line – January 31st, 2021]

THE PARISH UPDATE, JANUARY 19th, 2021:

REVD STEVE DIXON WROTE:

Dear brothers and sisters,

Thank you to all who have joined us online for our live-streamed services from church.

I am very aware that we all have different spiritual needs and concerns. Hearing some of the feedback I have received about our online services during this lockdown, I know that some are pleased that we have included communion, while others find it peculiar to witness communion while not being able to participate fully.

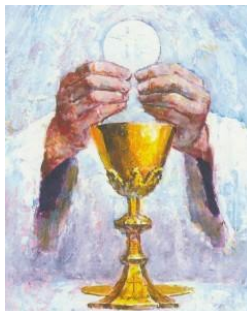
For this reason, I have decided to move to holding a live-streamed *Service of The Word* at 1000 on Sundays followed by a short service of Holy Communion for those who wish to continue watching.

I hope that this will be a step toward meeting the needs of the majority of you who join us online.

Online Sunday worship uses this link: <https://youtu.be/J4xwbnymPhQ>
The service continues to be available as a recording on youtube once the live-stream has finished.

Our 1100 Wednesday meetings for our zoom coffee and chat continue:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/79287753657?pwd=amFEVzJSb0N3L1JUeml1NHgzVXMvQT09> Meeting ID: 792 8775 3657 Passcode: Mj0x2C





THE VICAR WRITES.....

As I write, the words of the Prime Minister and news-broadcasters are echoing through my mind, as we reach the crushing statistic of 100,000 Covid deaths. All of this mounting sorrow comes just one year after the first Covid case was confirmed in the UK. This figure is a dreadful reminder of the frailty of humanity and the countless lives which have been scarred by the pain of bereavement. I feel a tinge of guilt that my own life has been, in comparison, only mildly irritated but largely unaffected by the ravages of the pandemic. At the

same time, I feel a wave of sorrow sweep across my being as I cry out to God for all those who now live with a hole in their souls which thus time last year was filled by a mother, father, husband, wife, brother, sister, child, or friend. To each of them, this is no mere statistic.

Archbishop Justin appeared on *BBC Breakfast News* in response to this appalling news and spoke with authenticity from his personal experience of grief; at the death of a friend to Covid and of his child in a car accident. He was also given opportunity to speak of his firm hope, founded in faith and his conviction that God is always present.

I often remind bereaved families that grief brings with it the full array of human emotion. At one moment we are overcome with uncontrollable weeping, then laughter at the recollection of a funny incident, perhaps gratitude for time spent together, then both sorrow and laughter may be replaced by a gnawing emptiness. We even experience the confusion of conflicting emotions sweeping through us in a crashing cacophony. None of this is right or wrong, it is just how we are, and we must accept it or even embrace it.

Archbishop Justin also stated that grief lies to us. It tells us that there is no future and no way around our sorrow. But he was keen to express that there is always hope and the opportunity to move on if we are in solidarity with one another and place our trust in God.

Drawing on my own experience of grief reminds me that, in the depths of sorrow, I have always sensed that I could not sink beyond the reach of God's love. Psalm 40.2 says that

*He drew me up from the desolate pit,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.*

This verse helps me to push away the lies of grief with the hope that God will put us back on firm ground and start us on our journey again. This must surely be the heartfelt cry of all humanity at this time; that we will be able to move forward and rebuild our lives. And for me, and I hope for many others, we will find Jesus to be our rock and the Holy Spirit guiding us to the next steps.

And finally, I was encouraged that Archbishop Justin invited us to pray for ourselves and our nation in the simplest but most sincere words: *God, help us!*

Steve

EDITORIAL

John Pearce writes: I don't, I think, thank God often enough for small mercies, probably because mercy of any kind is liable to interfere with the interior monologue which has gone on in my head for as long as I remember. At various periods in my life the voice of that monologue has risen to a harsh rant, loud enough to drown out hope, pour the iciest of cold water on optimism and, at the very lowest points, make me question just what it is that makes life worth living. At the same time, I don't kid myself that this story is not one which most people could tell should they be, like me, given to both introspection and in-growing guilt.

A lifetime of happiness? said George Bernard Shaw. *No man could bear it. It would be hell on earth.* The first time I came across that epigram, trawling through the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* for ideas that could be recycled as motions for the University Debating Society, I thought it was profoundly silly [in the sense that Shaw was trying to be profound and succeeded only in being silly]. Now, I see what Shaw was driving at; that we can only value, relish and give thanks for happiness if we have known its opposite. I still think that someone as intelligent as he should have known better than to show off at the risk of being misunderstood.

All of which probably strikes readers who have got this far as nervous throat clearing, and they would be right to think so. Throughout my life, as throughout anyone's, there have been highs and lows, peaks and troughs, swings and roundabouts. And like a lot of other people I have never really felt that I merited the peaks, and have been prone – even, in a way, grateful – to accept the troughs as no more than I deserve. Looking back, it is even possible to see it as a pattern. My Grandma, a Primitive Methodist matriarch, was full of epigrams, like George Bernard Shaw reincarnated as a Durham pitman's wife. *You weren't put on this earth to enjoy yourself: the mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small: man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward: God is not mocked: Thou, God, seest me:* and, the most daunting of them all, the embroidered admonition

that hung above my bed and got between me and my sleep whenever I stayed with her: *Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Happiness, then, was something that no-one ever deserved; and misery was something that, if you wished to please God, you accepted not only as your lot, but as something you probably richly deserved. Which reflections explain the emotional rollercoaster that many of us, myself included, have ridden in the last twelve months. This dizzying journey makes it even more urgently necessary for us to recognise and give thanks for the small mercies: mercies, maybe, such as those manifested by Abby, Kalash, Carly, Giles, Lorna, Tracy and Kevin.

Abby, a young police constable, is called to attend Eva, an old lady confused by early dementia, her confusion intensified by an untreated infection. Eva has been found wandering in the street. Abby takes Eva's arm, knocks doors, finds Eva's address and takes her home, makes them both tea and sits with her until the paramedics she has alerted arrive. [Abby does this partly because, she says later, Eva reminds her of her Gran.] She phones Eva's close friend Betty, who lives in the next street, and, finding that she has no keys to Eva's house, borrows Eva's and has a spare set cut for Betty at the local supermarket. When Abby tells the key-cutter, Kalash, exactly why she needs the keys, he refuses payment.

Carly works as a cleaner, and two of her clients, Ernie and Reg, both widowers, share a flat in a sheltered housing unit. Belonging to an older generation, to them the dustpan and brush, the vacuum cleaner and the kitchen are rather a mystery. Early in the pandemic, Carly realises that Ernie and Reg are not eating properly, as they are too frightened to go out and do their modest twice-weekly shop – tins of soup, ready meals, baked beans, eggs, bread, tea, milk, cans of cheap beer. Carly and her partner Giles go to the mini-market and stock up Ernie and Bill with a three month's supply of basic groceries, telling them that they can pay for it weekly as their old age pension comes in; nine months on she is still doing it.

Martin and Joan are old, clinically and emotionally vulnerable, and live seventy miles from the nearest of their three children – the other two both live in London. All of their children are key workers, and have needed to stay away from their parents for safety's sake, with the result that Martin and Joan have not seen their children or grandchildren for seven months. And because they are not internet-savvy, they cannot communicate with them apart from basic landline phone calls. Both of them are becoming more and more depressed. Seeing this, their paper-girl Lorna, who calls for her money each week, asks her mum and dad, Tracy and Kevin, if they can help. With the family's support, they organise the purchase of a mobile phone and teach Martin and Joan to send text messages, take photographs and send them, and best of all and to their great delight, how to Face-time and

Zoom. For the first time since last September, Martin and Joan feel a part of their extended family again, with something in their day to look forward to.

Martin and Joan's story is true, as are the two other stories, although for obvious reasons I have altered names, genders and trivial matters of circumstance. The important fact about Abby, Eva, Kalash, Carly, Giles, Ernie, Reg, Martin, Joan, Lorna, Tracy and Kevin is that they are what we would [rather patronisingly] describe as "ordinary people". I have said before in these pages that there is no such thing as an ordinary person, but, rather, an infinite number of extraordinary ones. To me, these people are not only extraordinary people, but also small mercies; and small mercies with a huge capacity to transform lives for the better. And for today I'm happy to follow Grandma's example and thank God for them.

Notes and News

Sheila Park writes: Thank you to all those who contributed to the Christmas flowers, whether financially, by supplying greenery from their gardens, or by helping with the arrangements. Seven of us arranged the greenery, and then six days later the flowers, and the result was really lovely. Unfortunately, two weeks later it all had to be dismantled because of the lockdown. This was particularly disappointing after all the work of setting everything up. The red carnations on the windowsills and round the pedestal of the font were still in good condition, so we assembled eight bunches from them and gave them to some of the ladies of the church who have been so busy in recent months keeping the church clean and safe for us all.

We all hope that the church will be able to open early in the Spring, and that we will be able to celebrate Easter properly this year inside the church and not sitting alone inside our homes watching the service on ipad or smart phone. If you couldn't donate at Christmas and would like to contribute to the cost of the flowers for Easter, you can always leave donations with me at 15 Ashleigh Grove.

Did anyone see, by the way, the four tiny, laughing Santa Clauses I put in the pots under the font? I put them there in memory of the late Bill Graham, who loved decorating the font at Christmas, and he always raised a smile with his arrangements. It's difficult having a laugh nowadays, having to do your arranging with a mask on. It will be good when we can smell the flowers once again.

This month's cover: Joe Biden was the fourth American President to commission a poem to be recited at his inauguration, and I am sure that I was not the only viewer to be moved to tears by *The Hill We Climb*, spoken by its author, Amanda Gorman, America's first Youth Poet Laureate. The vivid yellow of her topcoat drew the eye, but it was the measured recitation of her verse that

intrigued the ear and knocked at the heart. Rather than orating or declaiming, she spoke almost conversationally, her tone suiting the simple precision of her ideas and words. Although the poem was uneven in quality, its occasional lapses into banality were redeemed by Ms Gorman's controlled intensity. The extracts on our front cover were, to me, the best passages, for the hope they expressed. Donald Trump's conduct throughout his presidency damaged America grievously, and the senseless, murderous violence that he incited at the Capitol on January 6th 2021 will stand forever as a symbol of the squalid depths to which he disgraced his noble office. Ms Gorman's youthful confidence in her country's resilience, its ability to grow from grief, to find hope in hurt, was the best possible comment on that. The final lines speak beyond American politics to our own world. As the people of God we too live in a dawn renewed daily in the light of Christ: God grant that we may be brave enough both to see it and to be it. Bless you, Ms Gorman.

David Littlefield writes: Bess Gore's name may not be familiar as she moved to Chelmsford some years ago but I was saddened to learn of her recent death. Bess was a regular member of our congregation and a member of the Mothers Union. She and her late husband, Les, were active members of Tynemouth Priory Theatre where Bess worked hard in our Wardrobe Department. Bess and Les had the unique distinction of giving home-hospitality to 'Jesus' when, some years ago, an American Theatre Company staged *Godspell* at the Priory Theatre. The Gore's home in Princeway was the focal point for several enjoyable social activities and both Bess and Les will be remembered with gratitude and affection by many.

Editor's note: I remember Bess particularly for having used her good offices at the Priory Theatre to hire a suit of tails and a top hat, which came accompanied by an overpowering, almost visible, smell of mothballs. I had written songs and incidental music for a 1976 production at Tynemouth College of *Maria Marten and the Red Barn* and accompanied the performance in top hat and tails at the piano in the manner of the silent movies. Bess and Les came to see the show, and I remember them chuckling more or less continually throughout. Bless them.

CONSTANCE ANNE JOYCE [JOY] RAYNER, 1930-2020

John Pearce writes: Despite the pandemic it was good to see a strong attendance at Joy's beautiful memorial service, which took place on January 4th. Friends from the many different phases of her life – teaching, the local directorate of education, our church – gathered to celebrate a long and various life. As befitted a notably well-organised and meticulous person, Joy had left a detailed note of the music, hymns, readings and poems to be used at her commemoration,

as well as a brief autobiography on which to base her eulogy. I am grateful to her friend Mrs Joan Armstrong for her permission to reproduce Joy's notes here.



Joy was born on 26 March 1930. Her father was a Master Butcher in North Shields, her mother a dancing teacher in Tynemouth, and her beloved older brother, Alwyn, later became a chartered accountant.

The family lived in Manor Way, Tynemouth, and Joy was a pupil at Priory School until she was nine when WWII started in 1939, and she was evacuated, first for a year to a farm in Belsay, then to Hexham where, in 1941, she passed the scholarship examination and went to Hexham Girls Grammar School with a group of friends – a group which has have kept together for over 70 years.

In 1944, after years at school in Hexham, the war ended and she came home to Tynemouth and continued her education at Tynemouth Municipal High School. In 1948, she went to the Northern Counties College of Domestic Science in Newcastle for three years before beginning to teach, firstly at Bedlington Station Secondary Modern School, then at Tynemouth High School before becoming Head of the Home Economics Department at Whitley Bay Grammar School in 1960.

In 1974 Joy became an Adviser/Inspector at North Tyneside Education Authority, having responsibility for the general running of 15 schools in the Dudley and Wideopen areas, and a total responsibility for all the Home Economics education in North Tyneside. This was a job she enjoyed.

In 1981 at the age of 49, Joy married Geoffrey Rayner and moved to live in Cullercoats, then in 1988 she retired and they spent many happy years together travelling the world.

During her lifetime, Joy had many varied interests which included:

- *life here at Holy Saviour's Church*
- *music and singing in operatic societies (in the chorus line only!)*
- *dancing, both Scottish and Ballroom; Latin American being Joy's speciality.*
- *gardening – her pride and joy was a citrus tree which produced both oranges and lemons, and she was also proud of her ability to propagate the Mediterranean plant Plumbago*
- *Joy loved travelling worldwide, and for anyone with the time to listen, she could regale you with many stories of her travels and scrapes along the way*
- *games, including hockey, netball and badminton. Joy won 23 silver trophies playing tennis and played squash for Northumberland County*
- *In retirement she played golf, enjoying a mediocre standard (Geoffrey said it was played for amazement rather than amusement)*
- *Tai Chi, to keep her healthy, though not successfully as toward the end of her life Joy suffered several accidents and many diverse illnesses – too many to recall*

Looking back, Joy reflected that it was a cheerful and charmed life, being brought up in a close, loving family, having a happy marriage and interesting and challenging career, and a peaceful, contented retirement. Joy wrote further that

'all this could not have been possible without being surrounded by wonderful people; parents, work colleagues, old students, neighbours and many, many friends, both at home and abroad – too many to mention by name, but to each one, many grateful thanks.'

My own memories of Joy are of her cheerful and poised presence at Wednesday morning Holy Communions, and in particular of one of the nicest compliments I have ever been paid. When I first started making soup for the Wednesday Lunch Club I was only too aware of doing so for a clientele that included many very accomplished cooks, Joy among them. When I first got up the nerve to attempt a broccoli and stilton soup, I was a little nervous of its reception, the more so as, at the end of lunch, Joy left her seat and came to the serving hatch. "Can I ask who made that soup, please?" Rather hesitantly I owned up. "It was absolutely delicious – would you mind giving me the recipe?" I felt then and still feel as if I had been awarded a Michelin star. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

BIBLICAL WORDS [IX]: τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί – ti emoi kai soi

Clive Harper writes: The above Biblical words are a print-out, both in the Greek alphabet and phonetically, of some words said by Jesus at a wedding in Cana of Galilee; we find them in the second chapter of John's Gospel.

Of course, we do not know whether Jesus was speaking in Greek or Aramaic (or even Hebrew) but we do know that it has been a puzzle, down through the generations, as to what the words actually mean. A literal translation into English is given in our bibles as: *What to me and to you, woman?* which sounds a bit harsh (and incomprehensible) to our western ears; this was translated by St Jerome in the Latin (Vulgate) version of the Bible as: *quid mihi et tibi est mulier* which means the same as the Greek, as we would expect.

Other translations into English give different interpretations as they struggle to find out the meaning as to what Jesus said: so, in the main New Revised Standard Version we have: *Woman, what concern is that to you and to me* – which is more understandable but scarcely does justice to the text.

The thing to notice here is that the phrase *ti emoi kai soi* appears to be an idiom and to have had a particular meaning in ancient Israel; in the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament, it appears a number of times; it was a phrase in common use and it seems to emphasise a fundamental difference between the speaker and the hearer.

For example, there was a time when Elijah the prophet saved the life of the only son of a widow of Zarephath; the widow had said to Elijah; *ti emoi kai so, O man of God*, translated as *What have I got to do with you, O man of God*, seeming to imply there was this real difference between her way of life and that of the Prophet; what she was able to do compared with the power of the man of God. (It is rather akin to the meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus which I wrote about in the December *Parish News*).

So, Jesus could be saying to His mother: *your concerns are not mine; this is your business, not mine* because he goes on to say: *My hour has not yet come*. So, could He be saying *these are just human affairs and I do not want to be involved?* In other words: *is this an occasion for me to use divine powers when, with a delay, we could go to the shops and simply buy some more wine?*

However, the Bible story shows that Jesus clearly did respond to Mary's plea for the miracle in Cana of Galilee was recorded as the first of Jesus' signs. So, did Mary cajole Jesus into showing who He really was for, at the end of the story when the water had been turned into wine, we read: *He manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him ?*

Be the light in the darkness



Malcolm Railton writes: As I sit down to write for the *Parish News* my thoughts turn to two things. The death toll due to Covid 19 in the UK has passed 100,000 and our Archbishops of Canterbury and York have written an open letter asking us to pause and reflect on the enormity of this pandemic. They write this letter to us all in consolation but also in encouragement, and, ultimately in hope.

Today, as I write, it is January 27th, Holocaust Memorial Day and this year its theme is "Be the light in the darkness". Many buildings will be lit with purple light and we are asked to light a candle in our windows this evening.

I am not comparing the pandemic and the Holocaust. Obviously in the Holocaust six million Jews and others were murdered for no sane reason; this act is beyond comparison in human history. In the current pandemic, even if people have different ideas of who is responsible and to what degree, not many would claim that the spread of Covid and the subsequent death toll was a deliberate act.

However, those who have been touched by the pandemic may feel loneliness, grief and helplessness. As I mentioned earlier, our Archbishops have suggested prayer to help us and bring hope in this difficult time and this made me think of a prayer which is at least two thousand years old.

Kaddish, or the mourner's Kaddish as it is often referred to, was said in Aramaic at times of death and mourning and is still said by our Jewish brothers and sisters. Although it is a prayer of mourning, it does not mention death, rather it praises and glorifies God, and is a prayer for peace and hope. Two years ago this month I heard this prayer said by Rabbi Lipsey of Gosforth during a study visit to Auschwitz: it was an unforgettably emotional and poignant experience.

I have lighted my candle and placed it in my window and I will say Kaddish tonight for the victims of the Holocaust but also for the victims of Covid 19. I include the prayer below both in Aramaic and in English.

Mourner's Kaddish in Aramaic

אבל: יתגדל ויתקדש שמה רבא. [קהל: אמן]
בעלמא די ברא כרעותה וימליך מלכותה בחייכון וביומיכון ובחיי בית ישראל בעלמא ובזמן
קריב, ואמרו אמן: [קהל: אמן]
קהל ואבל: יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמא
אבל: יתברך וישתבח ויתפאר ויתרומם ויתנשא ויתהדר ויתעלה ויתהלל שמה דקדשא. בריך
הוא. [קהל: בריך הוא:]
לעלא מן כל ברכתא בעשי"ת: לעלא לעלא מכל ושירתא תשבחתא ונחמתא דאמירן בעלמא.
ואמרו אמן: [קהל: אמן]
יהא שלמא רבא מן שמיא וחיים עלינו ועל כל ישראל. ואמרו אמן: [קהל: אמן]

Mourner's Kaddish in English Translation

Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will.

May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen.

May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honoured, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

Editor's note: Malcolm has sourced both the Aramaic and English texts of Mourner's Kaddish from www.sefaria.org described by its authors as a *Living Library of Jewish Texts Online*. This is a copyright-free resource which includes Jewish scriptures, sacred texts and prayers with commentaries, and they are printed in a variety of languages. It is a repository of Jewish thought and wisdom and well worth a visit. Expect to see some further extracts in the *Parish News*.

Lockdown Reflections

Sheila Park writes: We are all now in the third lockdown, and I am wondering what all the retired parishioners are doing to occupy themselves during this, the most difficult so far of the lockdowns. In the first one we all threw ourselves into cooking, exercising, gardening, ringing up people we hadn't been in touch with for a while. The weather was lovely and we could sit out or potter in our gardens: it didn't seem too bad.

Now, people are generally a bit down. Dark, cold or wet days are so gloomy. If we ring our friends up we haven't much news, as we have hardly seen anyone and we haven't been anywhere. Our conversations on the phone are generally about whether we have had our vaccinations yet, and when we are getting our second doses. Some people are taking sneaky rides out in their cars, but as I don't drive I usually have only one, admittedly huge decision: whether to go to the pillar-box opposite the church on Broadway or the one at the end of Edith Street.

As I write this on January 19th, it has been dark and wet all day, so I haven't been out at all and so had to resort to tidying out a big drawer which contained files with copies of Mothers Union services and meeting minutes, bank statements and maps of the local area. I also came across the words to *The Lambton Worm*, *Cushie Butterfield* and Sir John Betjemen's Christmas poems, which passed a pleasant half-hour. And tonight? well, there is nothing on television, the match report from St James's Park of Newcastle United is depressing, so I am writing this article for

the parish magazine. Why don't a few more readers do the same, and give us all a smile if nothing else?

David Littlefield writes: Just a random thought.....during this pandemic, we have heard a great deal about mental health, and I am not alone in wanting everyone to be safe both physically and mentally. Every time I watch the sunrise from Tynemouth beach, I really do count my blessings and think of families marooned in high rise blocks of flats, struggling to home-school children, while also possibly living on a limited income.

My parents were born as the First World War ended and like all of that generation faced another war in 1939. My mother joined the WRNS and was stationed at a Naval base on the Firth of Forth in Scotland.....a boyfriend of that time took her up in a tiger-moth plane and in mid-air announced he had always wanted to fly under the Forth Bridge...but that is another story. By her own admission my mother's war was relatively easy. She enjoyed her work, was well fed and made many friends through parties and home-brewed pantomimes.

Dad was not so lucky. His Army life was ended when he was captured in North Africa and spent four years as a prisoner of war in Germany. He never ever discussed those years. To him, that chapter of his life was a 'closed book' and in later life, I do regret not persuading him to tell me more about that period in his life, but that was never encouraged.

I once heard a family member ask my father how he coped. His reply has never left me. 'We just had to get on with it'.

Like many others at this time I am trying to do likewise.

The Editor writes: Lockdown saw a surge in virtual church attendance: some much-needed good news in a difficult time. But, as the mass vaccination programme, now seemingly moving forward with heartening efficiency, slowly begins to free us to resume normal life, will on-line worship accelerate church closures, much as on-line shopping has closed high street shops across a wide range of the retail sector? Is it therefore time for the Church of England to begin to think creatively about what to do with its rapidly emptying buildings? The journalist **Simon Jenkins** offers some food for thought in this extract from an article first published in **The Guardian** on December 26th, 2020. Mr Jenkins argues, to my mind convincingly, that a return to normal must require us to re-think what we actually mean by normality. And can we be sure that this would amount to some version of the *status quo ante*? Our national church has a long history of preparing for the future by addressing it as if it will be like the past only more so. I wonder if we may have made that mistake for the last time?

The extract from Mr Jenkins's article below is re-published here under the terms of The Guardian's Open Licence Agreement, article 1.3 of which states that content may be reproduced with acknowledgement and without charge "in church or village or parish newsletters provided that in the case of articles you shall not exceed 500 words". This extract is 498 words long.

"The question of what is normal could clearly be traumatic for the church. Churches are in the same bind as other institutions in the local high street. Why drive and park when you can surf and click? According to the Archbishops' Council, 2,000 Anglican churches now have congregations of fewer than 10 people. A 2015 diocesan report found that nine churches in Asterby in Lincolnshire were serving a total population of just 1,319. Now these worshippers can choose online between high or low church – traditional, ardent or uncommitted – and in their own time. The clerical response to this is fierce. A church is not an event but a family, and at a time such as this it is a boon to its community. Some 90% of churches have been involved in food banks and deliveries, in caring for vulnerable and elderly people, in organising visits and phone conversations. The local church is a neighbourhood bond and a bulwark against loneliness. As Archbishop Justin Welby said in normal times it answers to the "human hunger for touch and affection".

Every community needs supportive institutions, but it is odd when they represent such a tiny minority, and one seen by most people as based in a cold, inconvenient building quite alien to their daily lives. Many churches have indeed found a new purpose during lockdown, and deserve the nation's thanks. But if the internet does meet a sizeable share of the demand for religion in Britain – as it does in the US – this will only worsen the plight of its over-supply of buildings.

Online shopping has transformed the way we acquire goods and services. Shops and offices have had to review their use of space – mostly downwards. But some 70% of England's churches are listed and un-destroyable, including 45% of England's Grade I historic buildings.

Churches cannot be left to collapse like medieval castles, to become picturesque ruins. They were built as the most prominent feature of Britain's local ceremonial and collective life. They are testaments to history and works of art. We are stuck with them for ever – and church lovers will say, thank goodness.

Somehow these structures must recapture their traditional role in the local community. Some are already showing imagination. They are finding new uses as social enterprises, as post offices, cafes, bookshops, concert halls, farmers' markets and even campsites – sometimes with the chancel still in use for worship. As pub numbers plummet under lockdown, there must be scope for ex-churches to

become social hubs for the neighbourhood, as Nottingham's pioneering Pitcher and Piano has done. If the church really means to serve the village "family", it may occasionally be as the Archers' Bull rather than St Stephen's.

I am sure most churches will struggle on as they are, but thousands must soon succumb to high street disease. The opportunity should be grabbed. Turning these buildings from a towering liability to a community asset should be a challenge to every town and village in the country."

LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

Christian teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage: Church House Publishing 2020

John Pearce writes: I had intended to read and review this recent publication, the Course Book based on which Revd Steve Dixon intends to use for our next Study Group at Holy Saviours. So far I have read only a hundred of its four hundred and eighty pages so it remains, I fear, very much a work in progress. I don't apologise for this, as there is a very good reason. Christopher has been home-schooled since the beginning of term, and Helen is working her full three day part-time teaching stint. Thus, for much of the last four weeks I have been simplifying fractions, solving algebraic equations, adding and subtracting mixed numbers, studying a poetry module [expect some samples in next month's news], the murder of St Thomas á Becket, mediaeval medicine [not for the faint-hearted], the Black Death [inopportunistically topical], rain forests, Antarctica, John Burgerman cartoons, shading, cross-hatching and stippling, planning a school timetable in French, life-skills for nurturing and maintaining self-esteem, and [I can't quite believe I'm writing this] designing, writing recipe instructions, and building a cheese and onion sandwich. Not that I ever have thought so myself, but let no-one think that teachers have a cushy number, especially this last year. *Living in Love and Faith* is thus on the back-burner, but I will finish it in time to review it for the March *Parish News*. Half-term starts on February 15th, so hurrah for the hols.

We have been compelled to revert to online publication only this month. It seems respectively certain and likely that the March and April editions will also be published only online. Decisions about resuming print publication will follow. For now, please note arrangements for the March edition.

ALL COPY TO THE EDITOR BY 1900 THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25th
Copy please to me by post, email or the News Mailbox in the Parish Centre.

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As this edition of the Parish News is published, our church services for the time being are being live-streamed on Youtube and via the church website. Each Sunday at 1000 there will be a Service of the Word at 1000, which will be followed by a Service of Holy Communion for those who wish to stay on and take part online. The recordings of services will continue to be available on YouTube using the links given on the inside front cover

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 0191 697 4562

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Churchwardens:

Janice Torpy
 Tel: 07920 049 341

David Bilton,
 19 Ashleigh Grove
 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. 07803 371929

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

0191 291 2742 or 07903 227 192.