

PARISH NEWS



APRIL 2021



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

April at Holy Saviours

[correct at the time of going to press – Sunday March 28th, 2021]

By the time this is read, on Easter Sunday, we will have held public worship for the first time since the second lockdown began in January. Following government and national Church of England rulings we will have observed the following procedures:

- masks will be worn throughout except for clergy, readers and intercessors who will remove them when actually speaking
- sanitising facilities will be available on entering and leaving the church
- social distancing – a two metre gap between worshippers – will be observed, and the seating capacity at services will be dictated by this
- for the time being there will be no singing, although possibilities for small groups being enabled to lead worship are being explored
- social fellowship will be permitted in the church gardens after the service, when groups of [maximum] six people or two households may meet and talk, provided that social distancing rules are observed
- when Holy Communion is celebrated it will be taken under one kind only, the use of a communal chalice being suspended for the time being
- future arrangements for Sunday and weekday services will continue to be published in Steve Dixon's weekly emails

Looking further ahead, please note that our Annual Parish Church Meeting will be held on **Sunday April 25th at 3.00 pm** in church. In preparation for this we have reviewing the Electoral Roll. The Roll can be inspected on the church website, though only the names appear. It has been assumed that you are still at the same address as last year unless you have notified the church otherwise.

For the time being we plan to continue services as follows:

Sundays at 1000 and 1130: Holy Communion

Sundays at 1800: Evening Prayer on Zoom – Meeting I/d 932 5122
1332, Passcode: 932986

We will also continue to meet for **Coffee and Chat** on Wednesdays at 1100 on Zoom – the Meeting i/d is Meeting ID: 970 9701 3865, and the Passcode: 036447

Please note that you can dial in on a landline telephone to the Zoom meetings above by ringing 0131 460 1196 and entering the Meeting ID number and Passcode number when prompted.

And please remember that we are still dealing with a fluid and rapidly changing situation – keep an eye on our website, Steve's emails and church-porch notices.



THE VICAR WRITES.....

I write to you just after receiving my first Covid vaccination. When waiting in the queue for my jab at the Nightingale Hospital near Sunderland, I was impressed by the immense scale of the facility. Row upon row of wards laid out in a brand new industrial unit, clearly built originally for heavy engineering. A network of pipes criss-crosses the towering roof void servicing each bed space with water and oxygen. But the whole building is eerily quiet and mostly unused. I found myself feeling very grateful that the pandemic didn't rise to the point of us needing such facilities and I prayed gratefully that we were spared from what might have been. It felt like a national near death experience; a very narrow escape from severe danger. Could I, or members of my family, have spent the last few days of their lives staring up into that roof void and the lattice of pipes from their emergency bed? And now, only a serene hum rises from one of the empty wards being used for vaccinations and our eventual national recovery from Covid. Kindly volunteers smile as they guide people to a booth where they receive a shot of hope.

As I waited in a seat after my vaccination, I felt a certain sense of freedom, that I was one step further away from life-threatening illness and playing my small part in helping society reopen its doors for business. However, this was tinged with the knowledge that I was one of the few fortunate ones in the world and that my step toward freedom still requires the caution of masks and distance from one another.

The 2004 Mel Gibson film *The Passion of the Christ* caused much controversy when it was released, for its harrowing depiction of the flogging and crucifixion. My lasting impressions of the film were based firstly in an intense longing for the suffering to be over; and secondly from the final scene, which starts out in darkness, then follows a shaft of light moving across the roof of the tomb as the stone rolls away. The light catches on Jesus as he steps up to walk out, free from the bonds of death and leaving behind the grave shroud. The relief was enormous and I felt like punching the air and crying, 'Yes, he's done it.' Jesus was free at last from the grip of inhumanity and death.

For the disciples, who witnessed the brutality meted out to Jesus, it must have been, to begin with, a deeply unsettling and threatening time; then, in equal measure, a joyous experience to be greeted by the risen Jesus. As we look back on the last year and try to think ahead, it feels that we have lived through our own Holy Week and Easter with the ups and downs of lockdowns, changing restrictions

and vaccinations. I feel it can only be a good thing that we use our reflections on current experience as a lens through which to look on the first Easter, and walk with Jesus through the lows and highs of life in the knowledge that he has been through it before us and is with us in our own journey. As we breathe a collective sigh of relief at the rapidity of the vaccination programme and begin to feel the increased freedom after lockdown, I hope we do so with deep gratitude and in the knowledge that our real freedom is found in the risen Jesus.

Steve

EDITORIAL

John Pearce writes: The news that Justin Welby is to take a sabbatical for three months beginning May 1st has been greeted with a range of responses, from understanding sympathy to disapproval so strong as to amount almost to scorn. One friend [never ask me who] went so far as to ask “How will we tell?” A poster defending the archbishop on the *Archbishop Cranmer* website said *“An archbishop on sabbatical isn’t taking a holiday; he is doing a different kind of work. So instead of tearing shreds off the man, consider that he is imperfect and knows it; and that sometimes he struggles with mental health problems and gets thing wrong, and he knows it. And the best way for an archbishop to be more perfect and to get more things right is to discover greater humility and unreserved obedience to God; to walk more in God’s presence and seek His holiness; to be more conscious of his own sin and weakness and the need of God’s mercy; to meditate upon the inner attitudes of the Disciples, to pray ceaselessly, and to seek purity of heart”*.

I can find a lot of sympathy with that viewpoint, much as I can with that of Karen Armstrong in *The Guardian* [where else?]: *“Unlike the archbishop, Jesus could not retire to cultivate his personal spirituality, because he was perpetually besieged by desperate people.....”* And, although she acknowledges that previous archbishops like Rowan Williams and George Carey [the latter perhaps not being the wisest choice of example] took sabbaticals, neither of them did so *“during a time of acute national crisis. So in choosing summer 2021 for his absence, Justin Welby seems to be saying that his personal wellbeing is paramount and that the anxiety, suffering, fear and grief of a country in the grip of a deadly pandemic and an economic crisis is, at best, a secondary concern.”* And although Ms Armstrong – like Cranmer – commits the elementary error of writing as if she could read Mr Welby’s mind, I find that point of view also well-urged and credible. If she is right, however, I can only surmise that the archbishop’s imputed error of judgement is in fact partly a function of the year of Covid. For the last twelve months he has spent far more time than usual with people whose primary function it is to sustain him in his role.

A large part of sustaining him must consist, I suggest, in affirming his decisions rather than challenging them; and one of the effects of living in a echo-chamber must be to render you tone-deaf to the world outside it – and that, to me, is the worst aspect of his decision: how much thought did he give to how it would look?

Which is a roundabout way of saying that, on the whole, I wish the archbishop well on his sabbatical [which is doubtless a great relief to his mind], and hope that he will return refreshed and ready for a very difficult year as he leads a tottering church trying to regain its feet. That said, I would recommend that in future decisions like this should be re-examined more carefully, not for their substance, but for the impression they are liable to create. It would be all too easy – even if desperately unfair to the man – to frame his sabbatical as the action of a man seeking time off to plan the management of an orderly decline: or even, to the kind of dishonest journalist who writes spiteful *Daily Mail* headlines [is there any other kind?], as the action of a fleeing passenger on the *Titanic* making sure of his booking in the lifeboat.

I find, however, something to worry about in what Justin Welby intends to study during his sabbatical. According to www.archbishopofcanterbury.org, he will spend time in Cambridge and the USA “doing further study on reconciliation”. This would seem to be a good use of his time, always provided that the outcome of his studies results in substantive action on things that actually matter. It would be good to have fresh ideas on how to reconcile one of the central paradoxes of Christian mission, which is that the more desperately our society needs it, the less it seems to want it. It would be good to be able to reconcile our preaching of love and tolerance with the factionalism that disfigures our church on subjects such as women’s ministry, safeguarding, sexuality, global poverty, gambling, addiction, rehabilitation, justice, prisons, racism, medical ethics, refugees, migration, immigration, children and how to evangelise them, assisted dying, unemployment, alienation, broken families, sexual abuse and the distribution of national wealth.

I fear, however, that we are more likely to be regaled with insights about subjects that matter tangentially, if at all: spectacularly pointless policies on church statuary and ornaments to ensure that they meet the latest woke specifications, for instance; a paper on inclusive LGBTQ+ language in the liturgy, or the promulgation of yet another inquiry into yet another issue on which the rest of the world made up its mind thirty years ago. I hope against hope that I am wrong, and that the archbishop’s studies will energise him to lead us from the front in the enormous tasks which confront us. As we emerge from the pandemic, our church needs urgently to acquire a renewed sense of direction. If it doesn’t, then within a generation it may well become an empty network of picturesque memorials to a bygone and superseded spirituality, like the pagan temples of Greece and Rome.

Notes and News

Sheila Park writes: Easter Flowers: Donations towards the cost of the Easter flowers will be gratefully received when the church reopens for worship in Holy week. If you prefer you may leave your donation at my house, 15, Ashleigh Grove. Any money received will be used for the cost of the Easter flowers and altar flowers in the coming months. Thank you.

The Editor writes: The PCC Social sub-committee: We are looking for new members of our social committee which meets to arrange the calendar of events and helps us to build our community and reach out to others. If you would like to join this group, please email Steve Dixon at vicar@holysaviours.org.uk. Currently the members of the committee are Steve Dixon, Malcolm Railton, Chris and Linda Benneworth, Carol Davidson and Liz Parr. In the coming months, the social mission of our church will be a crucial factor in helping us to move forward from the restrictions of lockdown. All ideas and assistance will be welcome.

The Vacancy in See Committee - Bethany Hume, Assistant Secretary, Diocese of Newcastle, writes: "I am assisting the Diocesan Secretary with an election to fill two casual lay vacancies on the Vacancy in See Committee (one for each Archdeaconry). I am contacting you about the nomination period that has opened to fill two lay places on the Vacancy in See Committee. This information has been circulated to all PCC and Deanery synod secretaries. The Vacancy in See Committee is responsible for part of the process of appointing a new diocesan bishop. It only meets when there is a vacancy for a new Bishop of Newcastle. The Committee, however, is a permanent fixture of the diocese and there are currently two lay vacancies, one from Northumberland Archdeaconry and one from Lindisfarne Archdeaconry. A guide to the Vacancy in See Committee is attached for further information about the function of the committee and the commitment involved.

As the Vacancy in See committee aims to be representative of the wider diocese, it is important to note that lay vacancies can be filled by any member of the laity in the Diocese who is a communicant (although they must be nominated and seconded by a member of the House of Laity in the Diocesan Synod). Please encourage members of the laity you know who represent different areas of the ministry of the diocese to stand for election.

However, it is only members of the House of Laity of Diocesan Synod who can nominate candidates and elect these positions. If you are seeking nomination and would like to contact a lay member of Diocesan Synod you can search the directory on our website <https://www.newcastle.anglican.org/membership/>, or

contact your local Deanery Secretary or email elections@newcastle.anglican.org and we would be happy to put you in contact with members of the House of Laity of Diocesan Synod. **Nominations are open until noon of Wednesday 7th April.** For those who wish to stand in the election could they please complete and return the nomination form (electronic submission will suffice), copying into the email the email addresses of the nominee and seconder, to the Diocesan Secretary: elections@newcastle.anglican.org."

Editor's Note: As Bishop Christine plans to retire from office this August, the Vacancy in See committee will be meeting during the spring and summer to consider the appointment of a new bishop. If anyone is interested in serving on this committee and would like further details and a nomination form, then please email me at heljon@blueyonder.co.uk. With the email on which her note above is based, Ms Hume sent me a very informative leaflet about the work of the committee and a nomination form. **If you are interested, then please contact me as soon as possible, given that nominations close on April 7th.**

Janice Torpy writes: Mothering Sunday: Mothering Sunday this year was 14th March. It's a different date every year as it is held on the fourth Sunday in Lent and is thus part of our Christian calendar. It is not to be confused with the American Mother's Day, which is held on second Sunday in May and founded by an American woman named Anna Jarvis.

Originating in the 16th Century, it was a day when people made a journey, a significant journey for many, to visit their Mother Church, namely the main church or cathedral of the region, where the service taking place would symbolize the coming together of families. Their mother church was also, often, the church where the people had been baptised and confirmed.

There was also a tradition, similar to Boxing Day, when those working on farms and in service were allowed to have the day off to visit their mothers and possibly go to church with the family. In a way this tradition still stands today, as many grown up children will make time to visit their parents on Mothering Sunday. In some parts of Britain, it was traditional to take the gift of a simnel cake, which led to the day also being called Simnel Sunday. And in keeping with the celebratory mood of the day, many people also broke the Lenten Fast on Mothering Sunday, which led to yet a third name for it, Refreshment Sunday.

In our times it's a day to spoil our Mums with gifts of flowers, chocolates or making the Sunday lunch (and doing the dishes afterwards). I wonder if this is why taking Mum out for a meal is so very popular? Let that be as it may, it is a day to celebrate ALL Mothers – and sometimes Aunties and Grandmas and even, perhaps especially, those Mums who are no longer with us. It is a chance to think

about and thank all those women who have, with their love, helped and nurtured us throughout our lives.

Holy Saviour's Social Committee wanted to do something special for this Mothering Sunday in the form of a small gift – a pot plant and a card. We hope this brought some cheer to those ladies in the congregation who are on their own, some who have had to shield and not seen their families for months, those whose families live away and can't travel, and those ladies who have had to endure not just the COVID 19 virus. We also send our thoughts and prayers and our love to ALL Mothers, not only in our congregation but the World over.



With my love from one Mum to another. Janice Torpy xx

THE BILTON BRAIN-TEASER [1]

Joan Dotchin writes: Well, what an evening the Quiz Evening turned out to be! It had everything! It was challenging, fun, exciting and as a bonus, £250 was raised for Church Funds.

A necessary skill to join the evening was the technical ability to join in the zoom session and be able to join “breakout rooms”, which was one of the reasons why I asked our family in Tynemouth and Winchester to form a team with Alan and me. I knew our grandchildren would have the skills to help out their less able Gran and Granda, and it looked as if others had had the same idea.

The questions had been cleverly set by Quizmaster David Bilton, and using the wonders of technology, he made his screen look as if he was asking us the questions from his back garden on a sunny day, with a beautifully manicured lawn in the background. David referred to his scorekeeper as his “Glamorous Assistant”, aka the lovely Karen. (Now this meant the Quizmaster and the Glamorous Assistant scorekeeper were both Biltons, and as the quiz was won by Team Bilton Babes, I leave you to draw whatever conclusion you wish from that).

There were one or two technical difficulties and frustrations as the quiz began, but these were ably dealt with by our resident expert, otherwise known as Techy Steve. As my daughter said in a text she sent me mid-quiz - *“I love how calm the vicar is being! He’s a total legend!”*

The Teams were split into breakout rooms so they could confer with each other. The technology was all new to me, and I have to admit without my techno family, I would have been lost. Problems with technology meant that sadly a couple of teams did fall by the wayside - but all credit to them for persevering and sticking with it as long as they did!

We had six very interesting and varied rounds, and the Quizmaster did an excellent job of presenting them - pictures, maps, music, logic puzzles, sweets and biscuits - we had them all! A round on pictures of local clocks caused quite a controversy, because the last picture was of the clock in the Bilton’s bathroom! (However, to make amends for those who hadn’t seen this interesting clock, I understand tours of the said bathroom can now be arranged for a nominal charge for church funds).

How the Glamorous Assistant kept the scores which were being fired at her by text every minute was impressive and commendable! Throughout, Techy Steve kept an eye on things by coming into the team breakout rooms to check everyone was OK and their technology was working. (Could this also have been a sneaky way of checking that no one was using their phones to find out answers?) By the end of the quiz only 5 points separated the top 7 teams, and joking apart, very well done to Team Bilton Babes on their win.

The evening was an absolute joy and great fun, and just the thing to lift our spirits. It was also interesting to look at the zoom screens and see a lot of liquid spirits being lifted too, during the course of the quiz. I’m sure by the end of the evening Techy Steve, Quizmaster and Glamorous Assistant needed a stiff drink and a darkened room. How they managed pull off such a feat was amazing. They did a brilliant job and deserve every credit. So thank you Steve, David and Karen.

“When is the next one?” asked our grandchildren.....

The editor writes: The David and Karen Bilton non-pub pub quiz night was a cracking evening from start to finish. There were several advantages to taking part on Zoom, most notably that you could do it in your pyjamas and dressing gowns [as did the Pearce family]. As against that, you couldn't sneak off to the toilet to look things up on your phone without its being obvious [as if anyone would have done, perish the thought]. David had worked hard to produce a Google-proof quiz [although it will be a long time before I forgive him for the clocks round]. Joan Dotchin's article above captures the occasion wonderfully well.

Just saying.....

David Littlefield writes: When THAT interview was on the television my wife and I watched a cookery programme on another channel. We had already heard enough. It would be wrong of me to use this magazine as a platform for my personal views regarding what was said. However I do have real concerns as to why it was done in the first place.

We live in a world of simply too much information. This media-driven, celebrity-dominated planet needs more discretion, more circumspection and to use an expression of my mother's, 'less washing of dirty linen in public'.

All families have their personal difficulties and even down-right rows. Surely they can all be dealt with in private...with, if considered necessary, the involvement of outside confidential agencies. And I include the Royal Family in this.

Information and 'news' is now available twenty-four hours a day, and this is often at the expense of privacy. And are we really interested in the personal details of people we will never meet?

I grew up in the 1950s in a home without a television and of course none of our modern devices such as lap-tops or mobile phones, let alone the internet. My media exposure was confined to *The Clitheroe Kid* and *The Navy Lark* on the then Home Service. Perhaps that was too limiting: but the pendulum has swung much too far the other way and we simply are told too much, without even asking.

Editor's note: I didn't watch the Oprah Winfrey show either, although I would probably get small thanks for saying in these pages why I didn't. But David's point is very well-made: that, just as work expands to fill the time available for its completion, news, irrespective of its value, truth or relevance, has to fill the information highway for every hour of every day. The result is an avalanche of piffle and a tsunami of trivia, overhung by a suffocating cloud of humbug. We live in an age dedicated to the principle of more, more and still more; but we haven't latched on to the obvious corollary that more, always – *but always* – means worse.

POETRY CORNER

The Editor writes: My long-standing and dear friend Timothy Duff never loses his capacity to surprise. We have been friends now for fifty years, but in all that time I never once suspected him of writing poetry. This touching reflection in verse draws on many years of sailing on the Broads, as well as referencing the well laid keel of love and faith on which his life is built. God bless you, Timothy.

The Retrospect

Near sixty years of sailing done,
Rich mix of many memories, won
From wind and water, sheet and sail,
From people and places. A mix to hail.

First evening: Thurne, beam wind, ebb tide,
A song, 'Now laughing friends deride'.
Onto the Yare, Club member made;
The die was cast, the keel was laid.

The keel of full days, and different all,
The early start, the tight close haul,
The gentle zephyr in summer's glow,
O'er Breydon to Bure Mouth in a blow.

The near-gale gybe, the three-reefed tack:
Mystique ever calling the sailor back.
Hard-won skills, a life which lends
To anecdotes, to laughter, a glass, and friends.

Near sixty years of sailing done,
Rich mix of many memories won.
Now flag hauled down, last voyage made,
The friends remain. A keel well laid.



The Editor writes: From reflection to wry humour with this verse sent to me by Liz Shipway. In the interests of copyright I tracked it down to the website of one Philip Carr Gomm, who printed it under the heading *A Brief Pageant of English Verse*. Mr Carr-Gomm is an author in the fields of psychology and Druidry, a psychologist, and one of the leaders and former Chosen Chief of The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. On his website he says that he has no idea who wrote the verse and, so far, no-one has come forward to claim authorship or identify the author. Given that whoever it was has pillaged for their own ends the verse of William Butler Yeats, John Masefield, Rudyard Kipling, Harold Boulton, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, Alfred Housman, John Keats, Michael Drayton and William Shakespeare I hardly think he or she will be in a position to get snippy about copyright. If anyone can identify the author, then please let me know and I will be happy to attribute it in the next *Parish News*.

A Lockdown Poem, or A Brief Pageant of English Verse

I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
I'll sanitise the doorknob and make a cup of tea.
I won't go down to the sea again; I won't go out at all,
I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall.
There's a green-eyed yellow idol to the north of Kathmandu,
But I shan't be seeing him just yet, and nor, I think, will you.
While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay
I'll make my bit of supper and eat it off a tray.
I shall not speed my bonny boat across the sea to Skye,
Or take the rolling English road from Birmingham to Rye.
About the woodland, just right now, I am not free to go
To see the 'Keep Out' posters or the cherry hung with snow.
And no, I won't be travelling much within the realms of gold,
Or get me to Milford Haven. All that's been put on hold.
"Give me your hands" I shan't request, albeit we are friends,
Nor come within a mile of you, until this virus ends.

BIBLICAL WORDS [XI]: PEACE BE UPON THE ISRAEL OF GOD

Clive Harper writes: These words can be found in the Bible at the end of St Paul's letter to the Galatians and they have excited much discussion among Christian scholars, and not only among them. The meaning of the phrase depends to some extent on a double meaning of the word "Israel". For instance, some years ago, I was speaking to a group of parishioners and I asked them the

question: “What is Israel?” One of them turned to me and said: “Don’t you mean ‘where is Israel?’”

To answer the question, we take ourselves back a few thousand years. Jacob, the son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham, was afraid: afraid of his uncle Laban from whom he was fleeing; and afraid of his brother Esau from whom he had stolen God’s blessing, and who was coming to meet him. So, there he was, “between the devil and the deep blue sea” and God came to him. It could be said that, at that moment, not only the country of Israel but also the ‘Israel of God’ was born.

For Jacob, we are told, had ‘striven with God and with humans’ and prevailed. And God, at that time and place, changed his name from Jacob to Israel, a name which means ‘one who strives or wrestles with God’.

So, ‘what is Israel’ and here I tread on eggshells, for it is easy to offend sensibilities. Perhaps I should ask: “What is the Israel of God”, which St Paul refers to above. When Jesus died and rose from the dead, which event we are celebrating in this Easter season, He founded the worldwide Church. Some will say “surely that happened at Pentecost”; but, whatever, through that great act of Salvation the Church was born and many have argued that, with that birth, the new Israel came into being.

But if that were to be so, where would the ‘old’ Israel stand? It will not do just for the Church to say that the Church is the new Israel, for it leaves too many unanswered questions.

So, I see the Israel of God as encompassing all those people of every time and place, including the Church, who have sought for truth and meaning and purpose and have sought with their whole being to do what is right and honest and true and have found Life in that search, both in the Church of Christ but also in places where the Spirit has blown, as Jesus said it would, and found answers and responses which we just do not know about.

Life is a great gift; but it is hard for many and we are not to judge; all we have is Jesus and we cannot limit His scope and the extent of His Salvation; we are called to serve Him, wherever we are, whilst we have life in our mortal frames, and to leave the rest to God, to whom we give the glory.

LAUGHTER

Malcolm Railton writes: Laughter: a strange title for a piece that I am writing on Tuesday 23rd March 2021, the anniversary of our first lockdown. As someone born in 1960, after the Second World War, and when subsequent problems such as rationing and rebuilding were over, the last fifteen months or so

have for many reasons been the most challenging period of my life. We have all lost people we love and our lives have changed dramatically. Many have suffered far more than I have, and my thoughts and prayers are with all who have and continue to suffer pain of any sort. Like many of you perhaps, I have had plenty of time to read and think. Recently I have read:

- books on the pandemic by Pope Francis and Tom Wright
- a children's book *"The boy at the back of the class"* which was recommended by some of the older children from our congregation about asylum seekers
- a book with a different take on anti-semitism by David Baddiel
- a couple of books by Barack Obama

However, last night, Glynis, the present Mrs Railton, reminded me that she had bought me Billy Connolly's recent book, *"Tall Tales & Wee Stories"*, and I decided to start reading it as light relief.

I am not going to quote from the book, as both some of the subject matter and the language used would not be appropriate for our church magazine, but it is the most that I have laughed for a long time. I had only read about the first sixty pages but I was laughing out loud, almost hysterically. I had to keep putting the book down about every three lines, drying my eyes and cleaning my glasses because I was crying with laughter.

I continued to read in bed and apparently the bed was shaking. This unexpected but certainly welcome hysterical laughter cheered me up enormously and has made me think. Laughter is perhaps one of God's greatest gifts to us, something which we can all too easily forget and this book has reminded me of that.

Of course, there are times to be reflective, maybe even solemn, but perhaps what we all need more than anything at this time is a good laugh. Ask yourselves, when was the last time that you laughed so hard that you cried?

I am not for one moment suggesting that we forget the suffering and sacrifices of the last year. Parts of that pain will never go away for some of us, but even when remembering those who are no longer with us and those we cannot yet meet up with, try to recall happy moments, things we have enjoyed together.

Read your favourite funny story, watch your favourite comedy, reminisce with a friend or relative, and have a good laugh. It will make you feel better; it certainly worked for me.

Editor's note: *Malcolm's humane, thoughtful and truthful words above awoke a memory of the time I went to see Billy Connolly at the City Hall – on September 11th, 2001. I was then working at Northumbria University, and the news had*

broken there in the early afternoon. My brother and his wife lived then as now in Washington DC, seven miles down the Potomac from the Pentagon, my niece in New York State and my nephew in New York City itself. Worse, his husband was an A and E consultant in a large Manhattan hospital. It was a very long two hours before I had heard from them all that they were safe. The Billy Connolly concert was an office birthday outing, a surreal evening at the end of a day when the world seemed to have come loose from its pivot. When Connolly came on stage he began by saying "It's been a strange old day all right....." He got about ten minutes in, stopped, and said: "I can't get past this.....here I am trying to make you laugh, and here you are trying to laugh, and all of the time I'm seeing those planes piling in to those buildings and so are you.....what are we supposed to make of it all?"

There was a moment's silence and then some people started to applaud. Most of us joined in, and he carried on from there. I laughed until I cried [which is not always distinguishable from crying until you laugh] and I've never forgotten the bravery of what he did – had it gone the other way his act would have been stopped dead in its tracks. But somehow in all of that there was a feel of "life goes on and that is how it should be" which made us all feel that crucial 5% better, enough for us to give ourselves permission to enjoy ourselves. And for all the four letter language and the blasphemy there is a kind of innocence in Connolly, a delight in the ridiculous, childish glee at the mortification of the prim and ladylike maiden aunt who breaks wind loudly during family high tea.....like all comedy, his is a gift we should treasure, even if his language does make us wince at times.

WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL, 1874 - 1965

Malcolm Railton writes: Churchill: just the mention of the man's name has become emotive. I should point out, right from the start, that I am not here to judge Winston Churchill, or anyone else for that matter. There are many who think of him as a great man of many achievements and also those who think rather less of him. These divided, polarised, and diverse opinions, and the reasons why they are held, is what I intend to discuss.

It seems to me that every subject, whether we are talking about Brexit, politics, racism, anti-semitism, violence against women or any other imaginable topic, immediately produces a polarity of opinion. We are expected to be one hundred percent in favour of something or one hundred percent opposed to it and as a result our society is becoming more divided – almost tribal – in many ways. Everything is oversimplified, often to create snappy, ear-catching sound-bites, and this does not assist balanced and reasonable debate and thought.

A few years ago I visited Chartwell, Churchill's former home and learned a few things about him which surprised me. He is remembered by most people for his

great contributions to this country during the Second World War, but when he was asked what he thought to be his greatest achievement, he amusingly replied that it was persuading his wife to marry him. That reply and his famous riposte to Lady Astor when he was drunk show that the man had a great sense of humour.

There is a lot of talk regarding freedom of speech at the moment and this is not a new thing. In October 1943, Churchill said, "Everyone is in favour of free speech. Hardly a day passes without its being extolled, but some people's idea of it is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back it is an outrage." Freedom of speech must apply equally to all or it is not free. On a more serious note, the European Convention on Human Rights was Churchill's Dream and he was largely responsible for it. In 1948, he wrote, "In the centre of our movement stands the idea of a charter of Human Rights, guarded by freedom and sustained by law."

In his own opinion, the instigation of this convention and the prevention of further wars and atrocities in Europe were his greatest achievements and his legacy. He had witnessed terrible things during the war and was determined that they should never happen again. There is a great deal of anti-European sentiment at the moment, and again to discuss that is not the purpose of this article. You may agree or disagree with it but it hardly seems justifiable to be anti-Europe and claim that you are standing up for Churchill.

Thankfully, the United Kingdom has stated that it is committed to membership of the European Convention on Human Rights and Brexit will not prevent cases being taken to the European Court of Human Rights. However, the repeal of the Human Rights Act might render European Court decisions less effective and not necessarily bound by law. Thus, we end up in a position where we will guard and defend a statue of Sir Winston Churchill but happily discard what he believed to be his greatest achievement and legacy, and something that may have saved many lives.

As I said at the start, it is not my purpose to judge anyone or to change anyone's opinions but merely to encourage all of us to maintain an open mind and a sense of fairness and what is right. Ultimately, there is only one true path, the path of the Lord, and that arguably is the only thing that we should be one hundred percent behind.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55: 8-9 NRSV)

WILLIAM OF OCCAM



Picture credit: Wikimedia Commons

John Pearce writes: William of Occam [1287-1347] is commemorated in the Church of England calendar on April 10th. He is thought to have been born in Ockham, a small village in Surrey, and, following studies at the University of Oxford, spent a great deal of his life moving between universities in France and Germany. Although he was never officially condemned as a heretic [if he had been, he would probably have been executed], his doctrine of fideism caused his excommunication from the Roman Catholic church in 1328. Mediaeval Catholic scholarship held that the existence of God could be proved by pure reason alone, and William's belief – that faith is the only way in which human beings can know God – ran directly counter to this. I have always found fideism a very sympathetic idea, for the simple reason that if we could prove rationally the existence of God then he becomes another phenomenon of life, like gravity or fire, and hence capable of being fully understood. When Graham Greene, in the novel *Brighton Rock*, has a Catholic priest say "My child, neither you nor I, none of us, can understand the appalling *strangeness* of the mercy of God" he was enunciating a fideistic principle: fully to understand God is to reduce him to human dimensions.

Easier to understand is, perhaps, Occam's Razor, my favourite philosophical principle. It is one which most of us adhere to in everyday life, although without realising it as often as not. William of Occam's version of its principle was that, in an argument, "entities should not be multiplied without necessity". Put simply, as it deserves to be, Occam believed that the simplest explanation for anything was

probably the right one; the more assumptions you have to make in formulating an argument, the less likely it is to hold water. It is a principle I dearly wish more modern scholars would adopt. My first [and I suspect last] attempt to understand Jacques Derrida, for example, foundered on this paragraph about textual deconstruction: “Rather, to deconstruct a text is to expose the inevitable and ineliminable contradictions and oppositions upon which it is founded, which it disguises and refuses to acknowledge, to expose it as devoid of fixed and determinate meaning, as irreducibly complex, unstable, and, even, impossible.” As Alice said to the King at the trial of the Knave of Hearts, “If anyone can explain it, I’ll give him sixpence. I don’t believe there’s an atom of meaning in it.”

Occam was also a proponent of empiricism, the system of reasoning on which scientific method is based, which teaches that all knowledge derives from evidence that we can perceive with our senses. In short, unlike many philosophers whose attempts to explain the human race to itself often seem to complicate the ordinary and make the plain obscure, William of Occam’s ideas remain accessible and down to earth seven hundred years after he died. He comes in particularly handy when you are listening to a political speech, wherein “a mass of complicated words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outline and covering up all the details. ... When there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish spurting out ink”. [George Orwell, *Politics and the English Language*, 1946]. Occam’s Razor is a tool no-one should leave home without.

And finally, from an idea in *The Parish Magazine Swap Shop*, some imaginary extracts from PCC Interview Panel comments about various Biblical characters applying to become their parish priest. It is a good test of your Bible knowledge as to how many of these jokes you can smile at and know why you smile.

ADAM: good man, but the wife may be a problem: she claims to have been deceived by a talking snake. Recent costectomy, has made good recovery.

NOAH: was in post at a previous church for 120 years but made no converts. Has some barmy ideas – who would sail round the world in a floating zoo?

JOSEPH: a big thinker, but prone to swanking; has a prison record. Accused of hanky-panky by Potiphar’s wife – probably not, but there’s no smoke without fire.

MOSES: couldn’t produce a birth certificate; sometimes loses his temper and acts rashly in business meetings. Did he leave an earlier church over a murder charge?

DAVID: the most promising candidate of all until we discovered the affair he had with his neighbour’s wife, even arranging the neighbour’s death in battle. Good singer, dab hand on the harp. Would be good at *Songs of Praise* service.

SOLOMON: great preacher, serious, excessive womaniser; shrewd, but takes some mad risks; offered to cut a baby in half to settle an argument once. I mean, really?

ELIJAH: prone to depression; collapses under pressure, keen ornithologist.

HOSEA: a sympathetic and caring parish priest, but could our congregation handle his wife's occupation? A Church Escort Service? I don't think so.....

SAMSON: doesn't seem to know his own strength: broke the Lay Vice-Chair's wrist when he shook hands. Scruffy appearance – far too long since his last haircut.

ESAU: another hairy customer, and gullible with it. Word is that a tin of Heinz Vegetable soup and he's anybody's.

JONAH: at interview told us he was swallowed up by a great fish. He said the fish later spat him out on the shore in King Edwards' Bay. Escorted from the premises.

JACOB: good cook, but too smooth for my liking, and crippled by sibling envy.

AMOS: a country bumpkin, backward, unpolished. With some seminary training, he might have promise; but has serious hang-ups about wealthy people.

JOHN: claims to have started as a Baptist, but doesn't dress like one. May be too Pentecostal. Sleeps rough, vegan, dresses like a tramp, provokes authorities.

MARY: insisted on sitting on the floor at interview; irritating habit of fiddling with hair, a good listener. Get the impression she might be a hero-worshipper?

PETER: rough as a badger's bum - bad tempered, foul mouthed. An inverted snob, ashamed of his northern accent. A loose cannon, wouldn't build anything on him.

MARTHA: on the way to her chair ran her finger along the window sills, looked at the result and sniffed audibly. She'd run a brilliant lunch club, but could she preach without telling the congregation to sit up straight and stop fidgeting?

PONTIUS PILATE: strong candidate on paper, a good delegator, tried too hard to please everyone at interview: could he deal with the Mothers Union in full cry? Compulsive hand washer – do we have a medical report?

PAUL: Powerful Chief Executive Officer type, spellbinding preacher. However is rude, tactless, unforgiving with younger colleagues, harsh, has been known to preach all night. Like many converts unable to countenance dissent.

TIMOTHY: rather a shy young man – does he need to come out of Paul's shadow?

JUDAS: Solid references, a strong track record as a steady plodder. Conservative with a small c, un-imaginative. Good with money, but prone to petty economies – said scented candle in interview room was extravagant. Strongest candidate by far, preaching a trial sermon this Sunday. But can he be trusted?

THE BILTON BRAIN-TEASER [2]: THE CAPTION COMPETITION

The Editor writes: David Bilton has kindly offered a prize of a bottle of wine to the best suggestion for a caption to this photograph of Karen inspecting the church drains. Please email entries to me at heljon@blueyonder.co.uk by close of play on **Monday 19th April**. Entries will be judged by David, Karen and myself.



Copy for the May edition should be posted either to the Parish News Mailbox, or to JCPrintmail@gmx.co.uk by **THURSDAY APRIL 22nd**. Completed artwork will be sent to the printers overnight on Sunday April 26th for publication in church on Saturday May 1st. All subscribers will receive details for 2021 – 2022 soon.

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Sunday public worship will resume on Easter Day – Sunday April 4th – with celebrations of Parish Holy Communion at 1000 and 1130. As we progress through the relaxation of lockdown, arrangements for resumption of other services and church activities will be published in Steve Dixon's weekly Parish Update emails and elsewhere.

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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.