

I've written about the gang of sparrows we see and hear in our garden—much less so now that the hedge has gone. I found this on the RSPB's web-site and it made me sad to think our gang have lost their favourite gathering location. We'll do our best to offer an alternative although it may take a couple of seasons.

That bush is making a racket! Hang on, it's full of house sparrows. House sparrows are very social birds. They gather in flocks that seemingly love a chin wag. Social structure and society are very important, and they often adopt a single bush or short section of hedge as a gathering location. Protect these fiercely – if this meeting point is lost it can impact your local house sparrow population. Imagine losing your favourite café!



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THE BENEFICE OF WESTFIELD AND GUESTLING

A letter from Rev Joy 17 January 2021

It's Thursday afternoon and I'm just back from posting a couple of letters in the High Street. The rain seemed extra wet today and I had a lucky escape as I managed to avoid the wash of a large scaffolding lorry as it raced up the road. There was no-one about which was a relief but I do miss a bit of amiable chatter with neighbours and friends. The Old Town is like a village in that regard, but all the locals are wisely taking the 'stay home' message to heart at the moment.

Clem and I enjoy watching the Repair Shop and find that we have to keep the tissues near as every week there is at least one encounter that makes the tears come. We put it down to all the emotion that we suppress when watching the news but it could just be that we're a soppy lot!

It's Friday evening now and I've received an email from Bishop Will which gives weight to our decision to suspend public worship in our churches last week.

"All Parishes across East Sussex have been asked to voluntarily suspend attendance at public worship until COVID cases decline across all East Sussex districts. The request originated from the Director of Public Health and East Sussex County Council..... Current Government advice allows for public worship to continue but both the national Church and the Diocese have stressed that decisions about this need to be taken with local circumstances in mind as COVID infection rates fluctuate from area to area and diocesan-wide."

We are due to review our own situation at the end of the month and will take this new advice into account.

Dennis received his first COVID vaccination last Monday at the Hastings Centre aka King's Church. The atmosphere was very

positive and all the staff and volunteers did a marvellous job in reassuring the nervous and making everyone welcome. I hope that a similar provision will soon be available to those of you who don't live in Hastings, if it isn't already.

I think it must be the January effect but this week has seemed to go on for far longer than a normal week. When we get to the evening it's sometimes hard to believe it is still the same day



as when we first got up. It's probably the same feeling that makes a small child in the back seat of the car on a long journey say over and over again "Are we there yet?" With this in mind I found this quote about the present context of pandemic we are living through: Are we there yet? Hardly. But we are definitely on our way. And we also have what we need: a faithful God who refuses to let go of us and who walks with us through the valley and into the sunlight of a new day.

I hope that brings some comfort to you as it did to me. This letter comes with my love and prayers for you all, Joy

Westfield Church and Guestling Church Services on Sundays in both churches and Wednesdays in Westfield are suspended until the end of January when we will review the situation.



Open Doors

Dear Friends at St Laurence Church ,
Guestling,

Thank you so much for your kind gift of £50.00 to strengthen our persecuted church family around the world who are risking it all to follow Jesus. Thanks to your prayers and support, our brothers and sisters know they are not alone and can stand strong in their faith.



Peninah's husband was killed by Islamic militants in 2018 after refusing to deny Jesus. You enabled the mother-of-one to

complete a dressmaking and tailoring course and begin studying fashion design. But, due to Covid-19, her final exams were cancelled. Her life and dreams were again put on hold – until you gave her a sewing machine for her to make a living.

"I would like to say thank you wherever you are," Peninah says. "You have played a great role in my life. I cannot pay you with anything but pray that the Lord, who has given you a heart to give, will be gracious to you."

May the Lord fill you with His Spirit and surround you with His love. May the Lord give you strength to persevere in your walk with Him.

Your sister in Christ,
Henrietta Blyth

CEO, Open Doors UK and Ireland

From Dawn's Journal

During a very busy time as we moved into our new home and then Christmas working at the shop I seem to have let my journal get lost in the pile of boxes. It resurfaced recently and time has come to dip into it once more. Today this seemed so appropriate to us as we are living at the moment so I share it with you.

Face your Goliath

Every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. 1 John 5:4

Everyone faces giants in their lifetime - giants like physical illness, marital struggles, unfulfilled dreams, the death of a loved one. When you are struggling against what feels like insurmountable odds, victory seems improbable, if not impossible. But the battle you're fighting isn't yours alone. It's also God's. In the same way a mother would fight for her beloved child, your Heavenly Father will fight for you. He's right by your side right here, right now. He can provide the strength, wisdom and perseverance you need to conquer any giant that comes your way. Simply put your trust in Him. That's what David did. When this biblical hero was young, he stood up to Goliath. Too small to wear the king's armour and too weak to wield his sword, David trusted that God could use a simple shepherd armed with a slingshot to bring down a giant. He was right. There's no Goliath in your life so big that God is not bigger still. Lean on Him. You'll not only stand up to the giants in your life but watch them fall as well.

God, one giant I need your help in overcoming
is

Take care, Dawn x

Second Sunday after Epiphany Sunday 17 January 2021

Collect

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature
by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen

Westfield and Guestling

Lectionary Readings

1 Samuel 3:1-10 John 1:43-51

BCP Readings Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Romans 12:6-16 John 2:1-11

Online services: <http://www.westfieldchurch.co.uk/online-services-for-westfield-church/>

Guestling <https://www.westfieldchurch.co.uk/online-services-for-guestling-church/>

Prayer for the church in a time of COVID

May your love that never fails
strengthen the weak, encourage the fearful,
calm the anxious, heal the sick
through your church – your washed hands and feet on earth
– distant but still present, virtual but still connected,
apart but still helping.

God in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Amen

CV19 Homegroup

Dear Everyone,

We haven't had a psalm for a while so today we are reading two consecutive ones because both, in different ways, speak to us about ways of coping in difficult times.

Psalm 130

No doubt, at various times during the last year, we have all felt like the psalmist in verses 1 and 2. We have felt overwhelmed by events and turned to God, pleading for his attention and mercy.

Notice that the first thing the psalmist does is to remember that he is a sinful human being and is not fit to stand before God, verses 3 and 4. However, he is confident that somehow God has the answer to his plight and that, in God Himself, he can find forgiveness. This psalm was written before Jesus came so the psalmist does not know exactly how God will achieve this, but he trusts that it will happen.

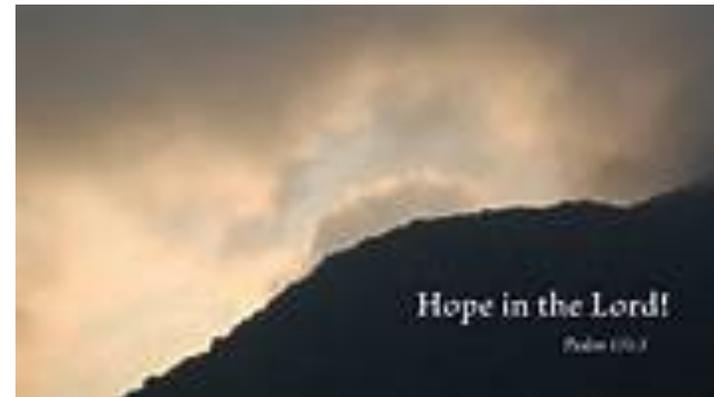
Now he has asked for God's attention and assured himself of God's forgiveness, the psalmist is calmer, verses 5 and 6. He pledges himself to wait for the Lord to intervene in his situation. His soul, his whole being longs for God to act to relieve his distress, but he accepts that this may not happen immediately. Like a night watchman, he longs for the dawn and knows it will come, but it sometimes seems to take a long time.

Finally, he encourages his fellow believers to put their hope in the Lord, verses 7 and 8, and, just as he gained confidence

through trusting in God's forgiveness and love, he urges others to do the same.

Psalm 131

This psalm has a wonderful, peaceful feel to it. The psalmist, probably David, has no answers to life's complexities and difficulties, verses 1 and 2. He is not even going to talk or worry about them. He simply comes into God's calm and loving presence, verse 2, and allows God to fill him with His love and peace. He comes to God as a small child runs to its mother, for protection and comfort in her arms. Like the previous psalmist, he urges his fellow believers to join him by putting their hope in the Lord too, verse 3.



Whatever our current situation, I hope these psalms will help us to take our sorrows and fears to God so we can receive the same peace and assurance as the psalmists did and can help our fellow believers to do the same.

Love Cathy