



Abington Pastoral Letter No.15 03.06.2020

Dear Friends

This letter is going to be a bit longer than usual as we have many messages from the parish, deanery and from the national church.

### **Sunday worship**

Thank you to all those who joined our service on Pentecost Sunday. A big thank you to Canon Beverley who preached for us live during the service, to the Tallack family, Sarah, Alison, Tim and the choir for their wonderful contributions. There was a technical problem at the end of the service and as a result some got disconnected from the streaming while all comments on Facebook went lost. The video is currently unavailable. Apologies for any inconvenience. Instead I have attached a link to this email of the video which was shown at the end of the service. It is about inmates worshipping in prison and their testimonies. Later of the video we can hear them singing with their own voice, saying 'I am a child of God' caught up in the Holy Spirit.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-DnUIArVJygGszYWZDUg2YPX1T39q-fh/view?usp=sharing>

### **Online Eucharist with the Agape Meal**

The next online Eucharist will be on Sunday 14 June. We will keep that Sunday as Corpus Christi, the day of thanksgiving for holy communion. Some of you have asked when you were meant to share the Agape Meal during the Eucharist. You can do so when the prayers for the Agape Meal appear on the screen. It will appear after I have said 'the body of Christ broken for us all'.

## Canon Beverley's message to Abington on Pentecost Sunday

Here is what Canon Beverley said in her sermon during our service on Pentecost Sunday.

*It is a real joy and a privilege to be worshipping with you today and sharing a message with all of you from Abington parish and beyond this morning. It has been really wonderful to see the way that Abington parish and indeed all the deanery has pulled together during these difficult times, supporting each other and supporting others – in Abington through your food bank and support of other ones, and the special way that you support the care homes in the parish. Thank you so much for all that you are doing right now.*

*These are difficult times, and for many it is stressful or a cause for anxiety. But God wants us all to remember that we are never alone in difficult times. Throughout scripture we are reminded of this. In Isaiah (chapter 43, verse 2) God tells us that when we pass through the waters, he is with us. And in psalm 23 God reminds us that in the valley of the shadow of death he is right there with us, protecting us with his rod and his staff. We are never alone with God, and we can be sure that we are not alone now as we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit, because that is the way we experience God's presence with us, through the Holy Spirit.*

*Jesus in his life was with one group of people, in one place, for one time. When he returned to heaven he was able to send the Holy Spirit to be with all people, at all times and in all places. In the story of Pentecost we remember the arrival of the Holy Spirit in power to the disciples. As that happened they were filled with a new confidence to speak out about their faith. Peter was filled with a new wisdom, courage and confidence and spoke words that began a powerful new life as a preacher and an evangelist. That was quite a change from the fisherman Jesus had called not so many years before. Peter was equipped through the Spirit to do the job that Jesus had given him.*

*In the room with Peter, the spirit equipped different people with different gifts. As Alison told us in her reflection of her 20 years as a reader, God gives us the gifts that we need. So Jesus' brother James received gifts in administration and leadership that enabled him to lead the church from Jerusalem. Peter, Paul, Thomas and others received gifts of apostleship and evangelism to go out and tell others about the gospel. Others received gifts of healing, teaching or hospitality. All of those gifts were needed to be able to do the brand new work that was starting that day.*

*For us, as we face a brand new time and a brand new work, we too need to receive the gifts from the Holy Spirit that enable us to do God's work. As we retell the story of Pentecost its*

*important not to overlook what the disciples were doing in that house before the Spirit came. For days, for weeks, they gathered every day to pray. They asked God for what they needed, they asked God for help. So that's our starting point too. We must pray and ask God to give us the gifts that we need for this exciting new time in the life of the church. We know that while some of what we were before will go on, there are new things from lockdown that we value and don't want to lose, and life will be different for some time to come. The church goes on, but as on the day of Pentecost, it goes on in a fresh new way.*

*So let's pray that God will send us the gifts that we each need to be able to share the gospel and to be his church in these new times. Let's pray and ask God to give us, as he did to those first disciples, the wisdom, courage and confidence to share the good news in the power of the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost 3000 people came to faith in Jesus. What might happen today, if we pray for the Spirit to help us?*

*Father God, please send your holy Spirit on your church today. Show us by your spirit what our task is and how we are to do it. Give us the gifts that we need to be able to do your work today, and give us the wisdom, the confidence and the courage to do what is needed to bring people to faith in you today. May your blessing be upon all in Abington parish and all their friends and loved ones today.*

Canon Beverley Hollins, 31st May 2020

## **Alison's Reflections on 20 years as a Lay Reader in Abington**

Here is Alison's reflections on her ministry over the last 20 years in this place.

*On May 14th I received an email from Viv Wainwright, secretary of Readers for the Diocese. He and I trained together and were licensed together. (It was he who once took me to task for having painted toenails – but that's another story!) He was emailing our group to remind us that it was 20 years ago that day that we were all licensed as Readers.*

*20 years. It made me think about the time since I was licensed, how my ministry has developed and what the highs and lows have been. And what I've learned so far on the journey.*

*I've learned that it's ok to wear trousers and even (dare I whisper it) jeans to church – the sky doesn't come crashing down if I do. This may sound strange, but I used to feel it wasn't "proper" to wear trousers to church. Times change, and it's good to lose outdated attitudes.*

*I've learned that it's ok to say no to things – and sometimes it's actually necessary. But not if it's just because something seems scary. – that's never a good enough reason. Because I've learned that I can do scary things, things that I would never have believed possible.*

*Examples? Devising and co-leading a joint service for the Deanery. Going to unknown churches to take Evensong – every church does it slightly differently and you're never sure what you'll find. I'm not a fan of the unfamiliar.... Leading study groups – although I enjoy preaching from the pulpit, I've always been much less comfortable in small group situations where people want and expect to ask questions. And seem to think I might know the answers!*

*Leading intercessions at all, then beginning using my own words, and occasionally even doing without a script. Going to the Diocesan Ministry conference, which meant meeting lots of people I don't know (not my favourite thing) and dealing with "academic" theology. Taking a family service. Never work with children and animals.... Church online. Watch this space...*

*20 years ago each of these things would have been daunting beyond belief. And at the time each of them was daunting, but I firmly believe that when God calls, he also equips. He never asks us to do a task without giving us the resources we need for it.*

*I've learned to accept that sometimes "good enough" is good enough. When I first started writing sermons I'd spend a couple of days in the library at Bouverie Court reading every commentary on the given passage. Then I'd spend maybe 2-3 days writing and rewriting the sermon – longhand in those days, so no quick computer editing. But I was only working 2 days a week then and I had lots of time. I still aim to spend time preparing and writing a sermon, but sometimes life gets in the way and it has to be done in an hour on a Saturday evening. It's hard to let go of striving for perfection, but sometimes something has to give. And such is the grace of God, that some of those "dashed off at the last minute" sermons have been the ones that have got the biggest response from people at the door.*

*All of which reminds me constantly that NOTHING that I do as a reader is done by me alone – it is always God working through me. And so prayer and Bible reading have to underpin it all. Mark Hall, one of my favourite Christian songwriters wrote "Guard your time with God. Ministry only happens when you walk with Jesus. Otherwise it's human endeavour, and it will burn you out". I don't always manage it – life getting in the way again – but I know that it's important and I notice the difference if I let things slide.*

*Above all I know that God has never left my side. Everything in my ministry is through him and with him and for him. I've heard the Christian life described as "a wild crazy adventure". My*

*adventure over the past 20 years has been, mostly, great. I can't wait to see what the next stage holds.*

### **Archbishops' Joint Statement**

One of the callings as followers of Jesus Christ is to seek justice. The Archbishop of Canterbury and Archbishop of York released the following joint statement in regards with the recent event in the USA.

*Recent events in the United States of America have once again drawn public attention to the ongoing evil of white supremacy. Systemic racism continues to cause incalculable harm across the world. Our hearts weep for the suffering caused – for those who have lost their lives, those who have experienced persecution, those who live in fear. God's justice and love for all creation demands that this evil is properly confronted and tackled. Let us be clear: racism is an affront to God. It is born out of ignorance, and must be eradicated. We all bear the responsibility and must play our part to eliminate this scourge on humanity.*

*As Dr Martin Luther King Jr said, "In a real sense, we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Therefore, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."*

*We pray that God's abounding wisdom, compassion and love will guide leaders across the world to forge a better society.*

### **Sarah's message on another community photograph project**

Sarah has sent us another wonderful idea which we can take part in. Thank you Sarah for this lovely idea. Here is her message.

Following the success of our Church Family photos I thought it would be nice to have another photo slide show. Perhaps you could send me one or two pictures of either a flower in your garden, or a picture of your garden, and if you haven't got a garden, perhaps a flower or plant that you have seen while out and about that you enjoyed seeing. We can then share all of this beauty!

Please would you email to Sarah at [sarah.may@rathlin.net](mailto:sarah.may@rathlin.net) with the pictures. Once we have got

all the pictures, it will be shared as an outro of our service on Sunday.

### **Children's Craft Pack**

Alison has produced a lovely craft and bible study pack for children. It is attached to this letter. Thank you Alison!

### **Weekday Zoom Prayer Group**

Liz is preparing to lead a prayer group during the weekday via Zoom. It will be on Thursday at 10 am. Please contact Liz at [lizmk@outlook.com](mailto:lizmk@outlook.com) if you are interested in this service or if you have any request or suggestions. You will need to install Zoom on your smartphone or laptop. You can download it from here <https://zoom.us/download>.

### **Prayer with Poetry**

Liz has produced another lovely prayer exercise, this time is prayer and poetry. It is attached to this letter. Thank you Liz!

That is all from me for this week. As the lockdown restrictions start easing off, there will mixed responses in our community. Let us just affirm our mutual support to each other and remind the most vulnerable amongst us that they are being remembered and prayed for and that we are here to help them.

With love in Christ

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