



Abington Pastoral Letter No.22 22.07.2020

Dear Friends

A new normal and new life

I would like to first say thank you so much to all of you for all your prayers, good wishes, lovely cards and generous gifts for Elijah, Emmanuel and Simona. I also want to thank our lay leaders and ministers of the church for their amazing support, pastoral care and ministry.

For those who haven't heard the news yet, our second son, Elijah was born on 3rd of July, weighing 8.1 pounds. He is now nearly 3 weeks old and growing and changing very quickly. The time is just flying.



Simona and Elijah both are well and healthy. Emmanuel is slowly adjusting to the "new normal". It is a big change for him but he loves cuddling his baby brother and trying to help him as much as he can with us.

The birth of Elijah reminded us once again the faithfulness and goodness of our God. That doesn't mean things were all smooth and easy for us. There were moments when we were anxious and uncertain about what might happen in the future. But we have put our trust in God who is trustworthy and faithful. Your prayers, encouragement, support and love helped us to see that God is at work and that he is with us time and time again when things didn't feel easy. God has been there always for us, pouring out his blessings and love upon us but it was through you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, that God's love and his work was made visible to us. And now we are in a new chapter of our family life.

In the same way, that is exactly how we, as one family of God, have been able to travel together through uncertainties and challenges in this pandemic. That is exactly how we, as his Church, are going to overcome this crisis together by praying for the world, the church, those who are suffering and for each other; by loving God and loving our neighbor. Through God's grace and love, through our service for him and our neighbours, we can bring a new life into our world.

The Bible is full of stories that show us how our God can start new things and bring fresh life into the old in the midst of crisis. Friends, right now, in the middle of this crisis, this pandemic, God is at work to start something new, to bring a newness into our life. And he has invited us, his Church, to be part of that work.

We will soon be able to open the doors of our church building for public worship. It is going to be quite challenging. Things will feel different and strange. It might feel that the church building is open but not open because of the restrictions and measures we are going to have to put in place. But friends, when Christ was risen, the disciples were hiding behind the locked doors too to stay safe. And yet Christ came and stood amongst them and opened their hearts and minds to go out and share the gospel. The same thing happened at the Pentecost. God was willing to do that with the disciples then, God is still willing to do the same with us now.

Let us pray earnestly together that although we have to keep the social distance, we may become even more welcoming, even more loving, even more open so that the Spirit of God may work through us and touch the lives of people whom we meet.

Let us pray earnestly together that we may learn to grow the Kingdom of God and share the gospel in creative and fresh ways. Because now the world needs to hear the good news more than ever. People desperately needs to know God's love, comfort and grace more than ever in these difficult times and they rely on us to deliver the message from God to them.

See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness

and streams in the wasteland. (Isaiah 43.19 NIV)

Reflection on Matthew 13.24-30, 36-43 The Parable of Weeds among the Wheat

Bob has led the Sunday service which I found wonderful. Here is the reflection that he shared

with us during the service on the gospel reading. Thank you very much Bob for your word.

So here Jesus tells us another parable - story with a spiritual or moral lesson - which we have to work out its hidden meaning. But we are fortunate here as a few verses later the disciples manage to get Jesus to sit down and to explain its meaning.

That a field has been sown with good seed, but then the devil comes along and sows tares - that is weed seeds among the good seed. The temptation - and I'm sure all the gardeners among us will have done this at some time - is to try to pull out the weeds and accidentally uprooting the good plants. Yes, I've done myself even this week.

So Jesus says wait until the harvest and then the good seed will be separated from weeds in God's good time.

So how do we hear this parable. What is the field that has been sown with seed? And how do we apply it to ourselves - perhaps in our own hearts where we are given the gift of Jesus into our own hearts but other cares and distractions take us way from the Good news of Jesus? Or perhaps in our attitudes towards others

And does it also apply to our church built on the rock of St Peter both locally and what about our wider society in this nation? Do good seeds find themselves growing but find themselves to be alongside tares?

As some of you know the Church I attended in Coventry - St Peter's in Hillfields - was attended by a large number of Barbadian and Jamaican community - very much the Windrush generation and their children and grandchildren. So I have been very affected by the events associated with the sending some of the children of the Windrush generation back to countries that they did not know.

And then Black lives matter movement, following the brutal killing of George Floyd that has raised again so many questions about the history of this country - its involvement in the slave trade, its colonial past, how black communities have been treated since the 1960s and how history is taught and the stories we tell ourselves about our nation and how willing we are to learn from other's experiences.

And it has led me to reflect on our church - not just in Abington, but also the wider Church of England. To what extent have we based our lives and teaching on the teaching of Jesus but how much have we incorporated some of the weeds and tares of our society? The weeds and tares

which do not value every human being and structures which discriminate against certain groups.

And our church presents a very complex picture. Some of the great anti-apartheid campaigners were from our Anglican church: Canon John Collins of St Paul's Cathedral, Fr Trevor Huddleston in South Africa. In Coventry in the 1960s and 1970s and 80s one of the clergy, Canon Peter Berry personally welcomed every family moving into the city and more recently the ministry of John Sentamu and Francis-Dehqani. Very much the good seed.

But we know also that many people were not and have not been made welcome on our churches. I know that from conversations at St Peter's in Coventry. Even today - this week we hear of a black student ordinand having completed his training at Theological college being rejected from a curacy in a parish because of the colour of his skin.

And I have to reflect during my involvement with vocations over thirty years in this Diocese and elsewhere that none of my vocations adviser colleagues have been non-white – and more worrying so far I have done nothing about it. Perhaps these are these the tares that Jesus talks about. So there is much work to be done, both reflecting on where the tares have entered ourselves and how they are built into the structures of our church and society

And I hope we are not waiting until judgement day before we right some of these wrongs. And it is true that we should leave God to do the judging – it is not for us to judge for certainly one message from today's gospel is that is God's work

This Sunday service and a new experiment

The service will be broadcasted on Facebook and Youtube from this Sunday.

Alison Barnes, our lay Reader will lead our worship for this coming Sunday. I and my family will say hello at the beginning and we are hoping that we could introduce Elijah to you on the screen. While Alison is leading the service, I am going to provide a technical support and do some experiments with our online worship setting. So far, I had to be the priest, presenter, video editor, broadcasting technician all at the same time. I am going test whether it is possible to have words, music and videos on the screen, while someone else is leading the service from somewhere else. If this is proved to be possible, then someone else can help me with the technical stuff while I am focusing on leading the worship. The following Sunday 9th of August will be the Eucharist from the Rectory.

Thursday Prayer Group on Zoom

Liz Kelly has been leading a prayer group on Zoom every Thursday at 10 am. This group is open to everyone of course and they would love to see more people joining to pray together and share fellowship afterwards.

You can join via Zoom or over the phone. If you are using Zoom, then simply click this link.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82728345135?pwd=bHR2TGtXK2cwaGwwcXdWMDRiImFTQT09>

If you would like to join over the phone then you can use the following numbers.

Meeting ID: 827 2834 5135

Passcode: 313706

One tap mobile

+441314601196,,82728345135#,,,,,0#,,313706# United Kingdom

+442030512874,,82728345135#,,,,,0#,,313706# United Kingdom

Dial by your location

+44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom

+44 203 051 2874 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5240 United Kingdom

+44 203 901 7895 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: 827 2834 5135

Passcode: 313706

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kdUmxvOthn>

Virtually Keswick Convention

Donald has shared with us information about virtual Keswick Convention. It will run from Monday 27 to Friday 31 July and all programme will be livestreamed on their website

[\(https://vkc.keswickministries.org/\)](https://vkc.keswickministries.org/) and on their Youtube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/keswickconvention>)

I have taken a look at them and they do look very interesting with exciting list of speakers and themes. If you are interested in this event, please do click the link above and you will find a lot of useful information.

Zoom PCC Meeting

PCC meeting is to be held on Zoon on 29th July at 6 pm. We are going to discuss the plans for re-opening our church building and future patterns of worship.

That is all from me this week. I look forward to seeing you all on Sunday. Stay safe and God bless you all.

With love in Christ

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