



St Hilda's
Ashford

St Hilda's News



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We are looking for more contributions from the St Hilda's community, if you would like to contribute, please either call, email or send an article to the Parish Office.

If you would like help or to speak to a member of the ministry team please contact:

- Parish Office Tel 01784 253525
 Email
 office@sthilda.org
- Father Joseph can be contacted on
01784 254237
www.sthilda.org

Return to public Worship at St Hilda's

We are pleased to be able to welcome people back to public worship services in St Hilda's from Mothering Sunday 14th March.

As before we will be having a ticket booking system, the links will be on our Facebook page and website and will 'go live' at 9 am on Monday 8th March to book for Sunday's service. You can also contact the office to book your seat.

There will also be a Wednesday morning Eucharist on 17th March at 9.45am and tickets for that can be booked from 9am Thursday 11th March.

Places will be limited to maintain social distancing and masks will have to be worn in Church. There will be no junior church, however, children are very welcome to join in the main services in St Hilda's.

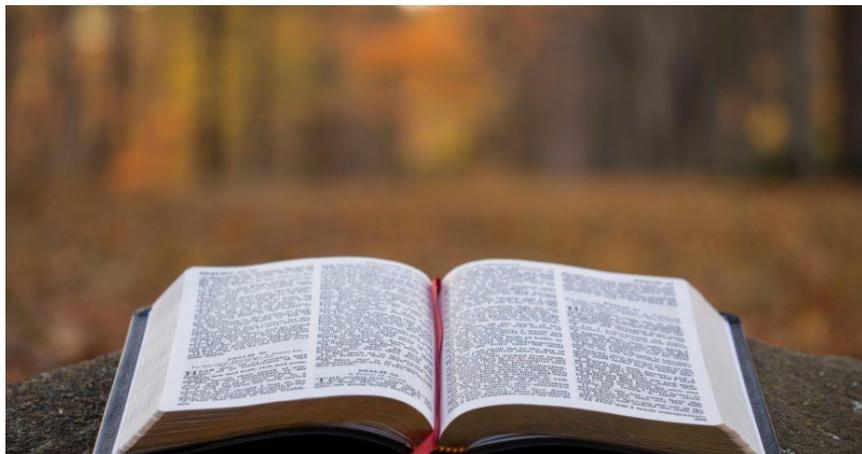
Grace and Race

Bishop Graham Tomlin explores how race and ethnicity are central to the gospel.

Let's be honest. Many of us (though not all) in the church have often felt in the past that questions of race and ethnicity are at best marginal, at worse a distraction from the gospel.

When I did my initial theological training in the 1980s, I don't recall any particular discussion of race. It seemed like a special interest of a few people, and not something essential to think or do anything about.

Yet I for one have begun to discover that questions around ethnic and cultural diversity are not marginal, but in fact take us to the heart of the gospel – not least because St Paul seems to have thought they did. There was a well-known occasion, referred to in Galatians 2.11-14, when Peter started to feel uncomfortable about meeting and eating in a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles in the church in Antioch. Eating together had great symbolic and social significance at the time and such a gathering implied to him and to others that the ethnic distinction between Jew and Gentile was no longer of fundamental importance. Under pressure from the more conservative Jewish-Christian groups, probably from the Jerusalem church, Peter started to withdraw from such mixed racial gatherings.



You might have thought Paul would have respected Peter's choice, and let it pass. Each to his own, you might say. Not a bit of it. This was, for Paul, something so crucial that he opposed Peter 'to his face'. Remember this was Peter the Apostle, who had known Jesus in the flesh, upon whom Jesus had said he would build his church, the one who had an unparalleled position of authority within the church. Opposing Peter in this way was risking Paul's entire ecclesiastical career, if he can be said to have had one at this stage! Why did Paul think this was such a big deal? A recent book by the Professor of New Testament in Durham University, John Barclay, explores Paul's theology of Grace. He shows how first century Greek and Roman culture was organised around a competition for honour and respect. Gifts and favours were a common way of lubricating social relationships and in that context, gifts would be given to those who were deemed to be worthy of the donor's generosity. The expectation was those gifts would be reciprocated to cement alliances, create relationships and enhance one's own social standing and respect within wider society. Roman citizens would not generally give gifts to the poor because they could not return the gift, leading to embarrassment all round.

God's gift of Jesus Christ however had been given irrespective of ethnicity, gender, wealth or status. It was a gift of grace that paid no attention to the worth of the recipient (although it did still expect a response and a change of life – it was unconditioned but not unconditional). This was the radically new message of the gospel, that the grace of the God of Israel was now available to all people, no matter what their racial background. Peter's action therefore implied that the gift was just like other gifts in that culture, given only to the worthy, on the basis of ethnic identity, primarily to Jewish people and only secondarily to Gentiles. It implied that Gentiles were not full members of the community because of their race, and because the gift was, after all, given according to ethnic status or identity. That's why Paul thought Peter's action was such a betrayal of the gospel and could not just be allowed to pass. It was not ethnicity, status or wealth, but the gracious gift of God that was the currency that mattered in these new experimental communities on the edge of empire, centred around the grace, or generosity of God. This just didn't fit with the normal categories of honour, gift and race at the time.

Instead, baptism gave a radical new identity – formed not around the Jewish Law, social status, or any other identity marker for that matter, but the presence and gift of Christ and the Holy Spirit – what Paul called a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5.17). It is why we give babies a new name at their baptism – a *Christian* name, different from their received family surname, indicating their new self in Christ, that their identity is not defined by family reputation, but by the worth given to them in Jesus Christ.

If in our structures, our forms of leadership and normative culture within the church we privilege one particular culture, making those from other cultures feel second rate or allowed in as visitors but not really valued as fully participant and valued members of the

church, then we are making the same mistake as Peter did. We are denying the gospel of grace that is offered regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, wealth or status.

Presumably Peter himself had to re-think his own attitudes in the light of this incident. He had already seen the need for Gentiles to be brought into the new community (Acts 15.7-11) yet he still had more to discover as to the full implications of what this meant. Attitudes to race are complex – the world is not neatly divided into racists or non-racists. We are all on a journey to discover the significance of God's radical gift of grace.

Grace and race are linked together. It is vital that we are able to create churches that are welcoming to all cultures and deliberately try to form genuine intercultural space which enables the expression and gift of all cultures to be received in the context of Christian faith. Prejudice is subtle and we often under-estimate the gifts of others due to our own preconceived ideas about people who are unlike us. This does not mean ignoring or being ashamed of our own particular cultures, but both critiquing them when they are sinful and valuing them when they reflect God's boundless wisdom. As Barclay puts it: "mutual welcome will require the members to relativise their traditions – not necessarily to abandon them, but to subordinate them to the higher goal of serving Christ."

It is the gospel, not a secular agenda that drives the Church's vision to combat racism and to see our churches genuinely reflect the varied and multi-faceted wisdom and grace of God in Christ. If we are able to respond to this with humility, creativity and a willingness to learn, we might just enable something to emerge in our churches that is truly glorious, beyond what we are able to anticipate or image. We might see churches in London and beyond that truly reflect God's generosity of welcome and that reflect, not just the diversity of our city, but the city which is to come – the city of Grace.

This is the right moment to act, housing commissioners tell Synod



The Bishop of Chelmsford-elect, Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, chairs the session on housing

WIDESPREAD approval and the warm reception given to the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Housing, Church and Community had opened up a window of opportunity, the commission's chair, Charlie Arbuthnot, told General Synod members on Saturday afternoon. It was "a door of hope" for the Church of England to lead by example and encourage others to follow, he said.

The question, in what was an issue of social justice, was how to go over and above in considering how church land might be used. Was the Church's mission and ministry better served by "saving money for the future, or by leading a national response to a national crisis now?"

The mapping of all the land owned in any guise by the Church of England, was not, he assured Synod, "setting everyone up for a fire-sale of assets" but a matter of "knowing what those assets are and how to make them available".

With reference to what he described as the "frustrating constraint" of charity law that required churches to maximise best-value returns, the Commission was recommending the introduction of a new church measure to enable parishes to sell land for community benefits at less than market rates.

The talk should not be about selling but about stewarding land, he said in answer to further questions from Synod members about market value and the pressure on national and diocesan budgets. He urged dioceses to remain as landlords of the land, and to ensure that any contractors approached to do work also signed up to these values.

"God has given us these resources to be used in the mission of the Church . . . for the people God loves," the Archbishop of Canterbury said in a brief introduction to the session, which was chaired by the new lead bishop for housing, the Bishop of Chelmsford-elect, Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani. He described it as a "radically, theologically profound challenge".

Another commission member, David Orr, who is the former chief executive of the National Housing Federation, spoke passionately of the need to engage everyone in a "huge challenge" that had not been invested in for decades — a "long-term problem requiring long-term engagement and collective thinking".

The Government had a part to play in how land was used, he said; but it needed a long-term strategy, something to drive change over the next 20 years. "We need no more short-term initiatives like starter homes which delivered nothing," he said. "We are leaving the poorest in our communities behind.

"This is a shared national endeavour. We all have a part to play. You in the Church have an opportunity to play a critical leadership role by saying: 'We are doing this and we invite others to join us.' It will depend on how we use our land and people."

The present definition of "affordable" housing meant nothing, said Mr Orr. "It has to be a relationship between price and income. People have to be able to afford to live in them." In

addition, he said: "Anything that comes from selling at less than market value must be kept as affordable in perpetuity and not turned into a private good."

The Bishop of Kensington, Dr Graham Tomlin, who is vice-chair of the commission, said that a real spiritual challenge lay at the heart of the issue of housing. He invited the Synod to think about what the Church was for: was it only interested in the survival of the institution?

Another commission member, the Revd Lynne Cullens, Rector of Stockport and Brinnington, urged parishes and dioceses to look at the wealth of resources on the commission's website, including the bank of 40 case studies it had undertaken. She rejoiced in work that was already happening — where churches, for example, were re-purposing church halls or developing land in partnership.

Synod members had a flood of questions. Mr Arbuthnot was optimistic about discussions he had had with opposition parties, and emphasised the commission's willingness to work with the Government. There was more talk there of "communities", which he took to be a sign that a more holistic approach was being taken by government.

"There is a real connection possible here," he concluded. "The number of endorsements of what we have said demonstrates that now is the time. There is a mood for change."

Archbishops' message: Don't be unkind to the Church or each other



The Archbishops of Canterbury and York deliver their presidential "reflection" at an informal online meeting of General Synod members on Saturday morning

THE Archbishops of Canterbury and York have once again decried a slew of recent criticism of the Church of England, and insist: there is no plan to abolish the parish system.

Speaking during their presidential "reflection" at an informal online meeting of General Synod members on Saturday morning, Archbishop Welby said that one of the key tasks for the Church in responding to the pandemic was to remain in the national debate, and "not to lose our nerve".

Of all the negative press coverage, what had hurt the most was the suggestion the parish system would be dismantled, the Archbishop of York, the Most Revd Stephen Cottrell, said. "We need to expand and reimagine and revitalise the parish system, not dismantle it," he told the Synod. "I want to pledge myself again to trying to ensure that we can have a viable, sustainable, flourishing Christian presence in every community in this land, with a much greater bias to the poor."

The remarks came after a joint article in *The Spectator* earlier this month, in which the Archbishops said that there were “rascally voices around who want to undermine the Church” — a pointed reference to several pieces from the same magazine which had attacked the C of E’s leadership over its response to the coronavirus crisis.

Contrary to speculation that a collapse in the Church’s income would lead to huge numbers of clergy being fired, and the dismantling of the parish system, parochial priesthood was “precious and central to the Church of England”, Archbishop Cottrell said: a historic vocation to serve every inch of the nation and every person in it.

Archbishop Welby said: “We’ve both been parish priests, for goodness sake. We’ve spent years of our lives serving in the parish system, so the idea we’d want to ditch it. . . It’s just rubbish!”

As well as vigorously pushing back against critical voices outside the Church, the Archbishops also bemoaned the tenor of much of the debate within the Church, especially when conducted online.

“I do worry about our discourse with each other, and I do wonder what other people think when they see that,” Archbishop Cottrell said. Assume everyone is speaking with the best of intentions, and be kind to each other, he urged.

Archbishop Welby concurred, lamenting the “cruelty and savagery” of how Christians spoke to each other online. He reminded the hundreds of Synod members watching on Zoom that, when they wrote anything on Twitter, “you’re not speaking to a person but to the whole blinking world.”

Forgiveness must become an everyday part of Christian debate, he concluded. He, like all Christians, would continue regularly to “mess up. . . We’re a bunch of sinners who need the grace of God, so let’s be merciful and forgiving to one another. Let’s love one another.”

Archbishop Cottrell ended the session by quoting a prayer attributed to Mother Theresa: “People are often unreasonable, irrational and self-centred. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.”

The session included archiepiscopal interviews with Dr Gary Bell, a psychiatrist specialising in treating mental ill- health in the clergy, and Kersten England, chief executive of Bradford Council and a canon of the city’s cathedral.

Dr Bell spoke with Archbishop Welby — who said that he was one of the psychiatrist’s patients — about the way that the pandemic had prompted an explosion in anxiety and depression, especially among the clergy. St Luke’s Healthcare for the Clergy, with whom Dr Bell often worked, had seen referrals go up two or three times compared to normal, but this was still only the “tip of the iceberg”, he warned.

Archbishop Cottrell then interviewed Ms England, who said that the past 12 months had been a “sober and shocking moment for our nation”. Despite being the sixth-richest country on earth, the UK had seen one of the highest death rates anywhere, as well as a highly disproportionate impact among poorer communities and ethnic minorities. Youth unemployment had doubled to 15 per cent in the district of Bradford, the second-highest in the country, Ms England said. “We have to stop and think: what kind of country are we now?”

Churches had played a fantastic role in combating this; but too many of the deprived estates had no Christian presence at all, she said; she challenged the C of E to recommit itself to these poorest communities.

'It's bringing marriage to modern days': Mothers to sign marriage certificates as parent for the first time since 19th century

The mothers of the bride and groom will now be able to have their names in the official marriage register.

While mothers are allowed to write their names as witnesses, currently only the father's name can be included as a parent, a tradition that dates back to the 1830s when marriage laws were first introduced.

Harry Benson, research director of the Marriage Foundation, told Premier the modernisation is a welcome change.

"[The marriage certificate] says the 'father of the bride' and 'father of the groom', and their occupations. There's no mention of the mothers.

"It's essentially a throwback to a time when, [for] the vast majority of people, it was the father who was the working person and the mother would have been at home looking after the kids. And that obviously changed 50 years ago, so this is a long overdue change."

The amendment is part of wider changes designed to "modernise" marriage legislation and transition from a paper-based system to an electronic one.

For example, under the new regulations, marriage registration will no longer be held in Church of England churches but instead the registry office will maintain an electronic marriage register.

Guidance issued by the Government reads: "Those marrying in the Church of England or Church in Wales will still be able to marry by ecclesiastical preliminaries. However, the member of the clergy will issue a "marriage document", similar to the schedule issued by

the superintendent registrar, which is to be taken to the marriage and signed by the couple, their witnesses and the member of the clergy. The couple will be responsible for returning the signed marriage document to the register office."

Other laws such as giving couples greater freedom to choose where to get married are also being looked at.

"The laws are actually in a state of flux at the moment...the Law Commission has been proposing that the law will change if Parliament approves it, and it will allow weddings to be conducted by people rather than in a particular building. We think these changes are all for the good," Mr Benson concluded.

The new regulations will be introduced on 4th May.

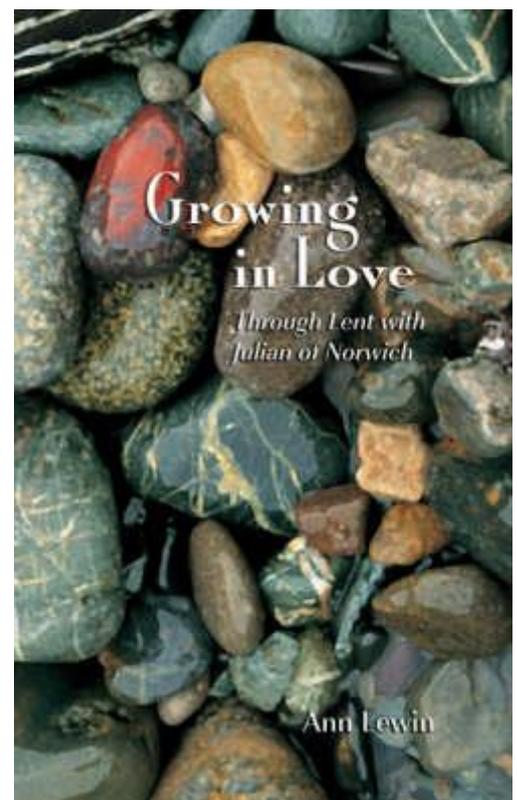
Growing in Love

Lent 3 Prayer

Prayer is about our relationship with God. When Jesus disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he gave them the prayer which starts "Our Father ..." Luke 11 It sets prayer in the context of a relationship with someone we know. Relationships involve giving and receiving from both sides. We need to develop that partnership with God in prayer.

As Julian wrote:

"Our good Lord revealed that it is very greatly pleasing to Him that a simple soul should come naked, openly and familiarly. For this is the loving yearning of the soul through the touch of the Holy Spirit, from the understanding which I have in this revelation. God, of your goodness give me yourself, for you are enough for me, I can ask for nothing which is less which can pay you full worship. And if I ask anything which is less, always I am in want: but only in you do I have everything" LT Ch 5



Maybe we learnt to say prayers when we were little, encouraged by our parents in the same way as we were encouraged to brush our teeth etc. This was to establish a routine in life that would bring benefits. But saying prayers is only part of a prayerful life, we can think about what our prayer life is. It should involve more than prayer just being a time of "asking", though that is often where we start. Indeed, Jesus' teachings on prayer involves asking.

"Jesus' teaching about asking in prayer was set in the context of a life lived in awareness of the Father's presence and he was talking to people of faith whose lives were rooted in the concept of being God's chosen people." P30

But we know that a relationship is built on giving and receiving and also needs work to grow. The trouble is we don't see God. But that doesn't mean we cannot develop that relationship. We don't always see our parents or relatives or best friends regularly, but the relationship continues because we spend time on them. To this end we need to give time to be loved by God and to learn to love God in return. The trouble is we tend to be busy people. There are difficulties which get in the way of the practice time which prevents prayer from becoming our way of life.

But we can make time for the things we really want to do. *"If prayer really is the lifeblood of our relationship with God, it needs to be given high priority. If we can begin to establish this relationship when life is fairly straightforward, when we feel more or less in control of our time, then when circumstances make it impossible to give as much time as we would like, we have a reservoir of experience to draw upon."* p33 - 34 When we find it difficult to find peace and quiet for such time, *"Then we have to take opportunities when they arise, recalling the presence of God, which we learned to value when circumstances were easier. Prayer means putting ourselves where God can catch our attention and love us into wholeness."* p 34

Keeping focused is also difficult at times. But we need to not worry about it and bring our thoughts gently back to what we want to attend to. A mantra/ rhythm prayer might help. A short text from scripture maybe: "My heart longs for you." Psalm 42, My Lord and my God "John 20:28. Or a Julian quote "Only in you I have all ".

Archbishop Michael Ramsey was asked by a reporter if he had said his prayers that morning. He said he had. He was then asked for how long. "About a minute. But it took me twenty nine minutes to get there," he said. We should listen to that.

We can feel that our prayer isn't heard, isn't answered, at least in we don't notice any difference.

There are times when prayer seems to go dead, when there seems little point to it and we don't seem to be going anywhere.

"Sometimes it comes to our mind that we have prayed a long time, and it still seems to us that we don't have what we ask for. But we should not be too depressed on this account for I am sure, according to our Lord's meaning, that either we are waiting for a better occasion, or for more grace, or a better gift." LT Ch 42

Julia didn't have a method of prayer. She felt that there were some essential elements in our exercise of prayer, but she did not divide them into separate categories. *"For her the experience of forgiveness led naturally to expressions of love and thankfulness, and deeper longing for God..."* P 35

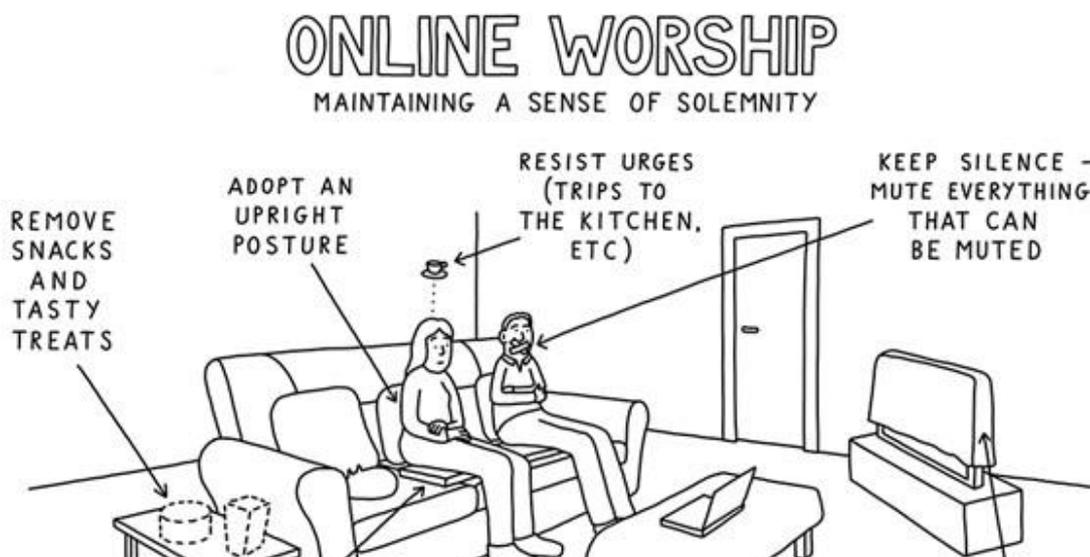
We cannot expect our prayer life, like any aspect of our lives, to be lived on the top of the mountain. There are ups and downs. Look at the story of Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration. (Luke 9: 18-43). They were caught up in a great spiritual experience and that Peter wanted to stay there. But they had to go back to living life at the bottom of the mountain with all its difficulties as well as its opportunities.

"Faithfulness is part of our commitment to our relationship with God. And having a prayerful attitude to life does not mean that we are good at prayer – to paraphrase Julian we are not good because we pray in this way, we are only good if we love God better." p37

From silence and stillness to the written prayers of daily worship in the services of the church, prayer can be undertaken in many ways. Perhaps you could take time this week to think about how and when you pray. Just in any conversation, speak, but perhaps even more importantly, listen.

Rosalyn Young

LT long text of The Revelation of Divine Love – Julian of Norwich
 ST short text of The Revelation of Divine Love – Julian of Norwich
 Pages from **Growing in Love – Through Lent with Julian of Norwich** by Ann Lewin .
 Published by Inspire reprint 2007 isbn 1-85852-320-6



St Hilda's Parish News

If you have any Parish News you would like to share, then please send them into the Parish Office.

Canaan Ministries are open for any of your Lent needs. Just simply phone or email them and they will look after you.

They sell a vast and diverse number of products; it is difficult to keep everything they sell on their website.

They would like to thank you all for your much-needed continued support.

In addition, please join the (Canaan) Facebook group, as it will be the best way for them to keep everyone up to date in this fast-changing situation that we find ourselves in!

Any other information can be found on their website www.canaanchristianministries.co.uk/

Psalm 25:4

Make me to know your ways, O
Lord;
teach me your paths.

This weeks services

Sunday Eucharist – 7th March @ 9.30am

These services can be viewed via our Facebook page, our new YouTube channel (St Hilda's Ashford), and Twitter.

There is no service on Wednesday 10th March.

Tea and Chat after Sunday Service

We would like to invite you to join us for a virtual Tea and Chat after the service on **Sunday 7th March 2021 at 11.15am**. See below on how to join.

The meeting is hosted by Zoom.

- Download the Zoom app – www.zoom.us
- Click – Join a Meeting
- Enter the Meeting id – **971 0055 5695**
- Enter password – **729362**



STEWARDSHIP/ DONATIONS

As Christians, our financial giving is a form of worship of a god who gives us everything. Due to the current pandemic St Hilda's, like many charities has had a reduced income whilst still having repair and running costs. I am conscious that many have not been able to contribute as they had previously. I would like to thank the many of you who are already regular committed givers and to all those who have supported us since the start of lockdowns, last March.

If you wish to make a one off or regular donation to the parish to support St Hilda's and our mission, please see below options to do so, alternatively call the Parish Office and Denise will help you. Thank you.

1. Parish Giving Scheme – Regular Giving

The Parish Giving Scheme has a telephone service, designed to enable donors to set up a regular Direct Debit donation over the phone.

- Call 0333 002 1271
- The phone line is open 9am – 5pm Monday-Friday
- An administrator will talk through the process
- The following information will be required:
 - Personal Bank Details
 - Name of the parish – Ashford St Hilda
 - Confirm whether the gift should increase with inflation each year
 - Confirm whether you are eligible for Gift Aid – they collect on our behalf
 - PGS Code for St Hilda's - **230623270**

2. CAF Donate – One off Donations - ONLINE

Click on the DONATIONS button on our website, sthilda.org, then please follow the instructions.

3. Standing Order – Regular Giving

Contact your local bank and set up a Standing Order with them

- Sort Code 60-01-22 (Nat West, Ashford)
- Account No. 36290696
- Account Name St Hilda's Parochial Church Council

4. Cheque donations

If you are unable to use any of the above ways then you can also send a cheque to The Parish Office payable to – St Hilda's Church PCC

Please hold in your prayers and thoughts this week those who are affected by the Corona Virus as well as the family and friends of those below.

The Sick

James Bedford	Jim Hennessey	Elizabeth Savill-Burgess	Chick Wilson
Michael Browne	Jean Iddiols	Delphine Scrivener	Peter Wilson
Robb Clarke	Jane Johnson	Riley Shaw	Jo Wood
Rebecca Cohen	Pat Kyle	Anne Shenton	Erin
Ann Considine	Libby Mills	Elsie Stone	George
Michael Dixon	Raymond Nation	Roy Stone	Joey
Peter Garner	June Prentice	Sandra Swain	Nic
Eileen Gilbert	John Radford	Rev. Peter Taylor	

The Recently Departed

Beryl Loveridge	Jean Newric	Carol Davies
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Prayer

Almighty God,
 you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,
 that they may return to the way of righteousness:
 grant to all those who are admitted
 into the fellowship of Christ's religion,
 that they may reject those things
 that are contrary to their profession,
 and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
 through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who is alive and reigns with you,
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.
 Amen