

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #16

1st July 2020

Dear Church Family,

As I was praying at All Saints' Cottenham on Sunday morning, I happened to glance up at the chandelier. Alison Wedgbury had mentioned the chandelier in her talk on Anglicanism on Friday so I now know that it is Elizabethan. Whilst I've obviously seen the chandelier many times, I hadn't properly noticed the small dove at the top with an olive leaf in its beak from the story of Noah. You will remember that once the waters had gone down, Noah first sent out a raven and then a dove, but both returned because they could find no place to set their feet. He waited seven days and sent out the dove again and it returned with a freshly plucked olive leaf in its beak. Knowing that the waters had receded further, he waited again until God told him that he and his family could leave the ark and make a new life for themselves on the changed earth.



Reflecting on the story of Noah, there are similarities I think with the current day. Like Noah, many of us have also been locked down for several months (and some remain so), listening to the daily briefings and the news, waiting to hear when it's safe to resume activities we previously took for granted. We too look for signs that things are getting better, that metaphorically the flood waters are receding - in reduced infections, reduced deaths, a lower R-rate. And we tentatively wait to see if gradual easing of the lockdown has an adverse effect on progress so far. We begin to see loved ones again, at first in the garden, careful to remain 2-metres apart, and now indoors whilst still being cautious. Some of us will begin to venture out for the first time in months and will experience the changes in supermarkets, GP surgeries, greengrocers, public transport, etc, that many of us have had to quickly adapt to. Life *is* different, and will continue to be so for some time to come as we all adjust to the 'new normal'. Recovery, particularly economic, will take some time.

After the flood, we read that God established a covenant with Noah for all life on earth, that never again would there be a flood to destroy the earth, and he set a rainbow in the sky as an everlasting reminder of that promise. It's remarkable that during the pandemic the rainbow has become the sign of hope in windows and doors across the country, and even appears on our village sign. But, rather than being a promise against floods, I like to think of it as a promise of God's presence with us in difficult times, a promise repeated by Jesus to the disciples before he left them to return to his Father: *'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'* We know that believing and trusting in Jesus doesn't shield us from difficulties in life, but we *do* know that Jesus is with us, day after day after day through the Holy Spirit, often represented as a dove. May that knowledge of his presence bring us comfort and peace as we adapt to the changed world around us in the coming weeks and months.

Whilst the government has said that churches can resume public worship, we await detailed guidance from the diocese before completing necessary risk assessments to enable this to happen. It will therefore be several weeks before we can return to worship in either church.

If you do not have access to the Internet (but have a DVD player) and would like a DVD recording of the online service, please let me know.

Services and events happening online this week are:

Fri 3rd July at 2pm – Bible Study on Zoom led by Frances Horgan. For the next few weeks we will be looking at the short book of 1 John.

Sun 5th July – Online service available on Facebook and YouTube from early on Sunday morning. Watch at whatever time is convenient to you.

Sun 5th July at 11am – coffee and chat after the service using Zoom. Do join us and catch up with one another.

Sun 5th July at 6pm – Evening Prayer using Zoom led this week by Sarah Rossouw. If you want to join, please let Cheryl Lowe (cheryl@cynewulf.co.uk) know, and she'll send you a link to the service. For the next few weeks we are going to be focusing on the Creeds.

For your prayers, please could you remember the following:

- Those known to you who have recently lost loved ones
- Those with long-term ill-health and their families caring for them
- Those who continue to shield so are unable to have much contact with family members
- All those working in the NHS and care homes
- For the hospitality sector as it moves towards re-opening this weekend
- For those affected by the attacks in Reading and Glasgow, those who were injured and particularly the families of those who died.

If you are using the 'Prayer and Worship from Home' resource, these are the Lectionary (set) readings for the week ahead:

Sat 4 th July	Judges 12: 1-7; Luke 17: 11-19
Sun 5 th July	Romans 7: 15-25a; Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30
Mon 6 th July	Judges 13: 1-24; Luke 17: 20 to end
Tues 7 th July	Judges 14; Luke 18: 1-14
Wed 8 th July	Judges 15: 1 to 16:3; Luke 18: 15-30
Thurs 9 th July	Judges 16: 4 to end; Luke 18: 31 to end
Fri 10 th July	Judges 17; Luke 19: 1-10

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Best wishes, Lynda.

Rector of All Saints Cottenham with Rampton

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