

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #24

26th August 2020

Dear Church Family,

The furore and subsequent U-turn over A-Level and GCSE results being allocated by algorithm have dominated headlines these last two weeks.

Instead of students' results being decided by their exam performance, grades were to be determined by a projection. The calculation included, amongst other things, factors such as their school's historic record. Whether intended or not, the outcome saw those from disadvantaged backgrounds more likely to have their marks downgraded than students from wealthier areas.

The driving force behind the understandable anger at this situation revealed something which gets to the very core of human desire. Students didn't want their grades determined for them by an algorithm. They wanted to be seen and judged for who they are and what they have produced.

Jesus himself experiences a crude version of this algorithm. In John 1, having answered Jesus' call to follow him, Philip finds Nathanael and tells him Jesus is the one about whom Moses and the prophets wrote. *'He's Joseph's son – from Nazareth.'* Nathanael famously retorts *'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?'* (John 1:46).

Knowing who Jesus is and all he achieved, we know to roll our eyes at Nathanael's naivety. Philip's response reflects the attitude we saw from the students who had been most affected in the UK: *'Come and see'. 'Nathanael, if you think nothing good can come from Nazareth, come and see the brilliance of the one who has been long promised.'*

If you think a school's previous performance would accurately determine the achievement of the current cohort, come and see. Ultimately, the government relented and reverted to using teacher-assessed grades, but the anger that this set of results has caused points to something so very precious about being known by the living God.

When it comes to exams we desire to be judged on our own merit; in Jesus we are offered something far greater. For those whose hope is in Christ, there will be no anxious waiting come the day when the world receives its final grade. For a relationship with God isn't based on our location, family history, peer group, or our own performance, but on the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

And it's immensely personal. God doesn't use an algorithm.

Services and events happening online this week are:

Sun 30th August – 8.30am Service of BCP Holy Communion at All Saints' Church, Cottenham, led by Revd Jenny Hill.

Online service available on Facebook and YouTube from early on Sunday morning (recorded by Lynda). Watch at whatever time is convenient to you. If you'd like a DVD of the service, please let Graham Appleby know (07803 932453).

This week, we continue our way through a new sermon series on the book of Jonah. This week is Jonah 2: A Merciful God.

Sun 30th August at 11am – coffee and chat after the online service using Zoom. Do join us and catch up with one another even if you haven't been before. It's really good to see one another!

Sun 30th August at 6pm – Evening Prayer using Zoom led this week by Cheryl Lowe. If you want to join, please let Cheryl (cheryl@cynewulf.co.uk) know, and she'll send you a link to the service. We continue to focus on the Creeds.

For your prayers, please could you remember the following:

- For those places in the world affected by conflict or disaster: Beirut, Belarus, the Yemen
- Those who have recently lost loved ones, especially the family of Edna Winter
- Those who are unwell and their families caring for them, in particular Joan Marsh (Mike's mum), Sheila Howarth, Janet Johnston, and Irene Winterbottom
- For schools and colleges as they begin to prepare for the new academic year
- For Martyn and I as we take a two-week break (Sat 29th Aug to Sat 12th Sept)
- All those working in the NHS and care homes, and those working hard to find a vaccine for Covid-19.

I am delighted to announce that we will have a curate joining the parish from July 2021. She is Marie Luchetta and will be a self-supporting minister working part-time. Marie is currently a Lay Reader in the Parish of the Ascension in Cambridge, training for the ordained ministry on the Eastern Region Ministry Course. We look forward to welcoming her!

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

Sat 29 th Aug	2 Samuel 9; Acts 8: 4-25
Sun 30 th Aug	Jonah 2; Matthew 16: 21-end
Mon 31 st Aug	2 Samuel 11; Acts 8: 26 to end
Tues 1 st Sept	2 Samuel 12: 1-25; Acts 9: 1-19a
Wed 2 nd Sept	2 Samuel 15: 1-12; Acts 9: 19b-31
Thurs 3 rd Sept	2 Samuel 16: 1-14; Acts 10: 1-16
Fri 4 th Sept	2 Samuel 17: 1-23; Acts 10: 17-33

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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