

Newsletter

Bruton

Brewham

Pitcombe

Redlynch

Shepton Montague

Wyke Champflower



The experience of the Church during the Covid pandemic has given rise to considerable reflection concerning our corporate life (our ‘communion’), the ways in which we worship and our sacramental life. The essence of the Church is that we are a community: a group of people called out and called together, and we understand that community to consist of both the current members of the Church (‘the church militant’) and those who have gone before us in the faith (the ‘communion of saints’, or ‘the church triumphant’). We also understand the Church to be the Body of Christ present in the world (see 1 Cor 12 and the letter to the Ephesians). There is a strong emphasis on togetherness and participation in Christianity: it is an incarnational religion and we are not passive observers but active participants.

This understanding has been challenged during the pandemic. To give some obvious examples, there have been times when our church buildings have been closed, we have not gathered together physically and all our worship has taken place in the virtual realm of Zoom and live streaming. There have been times when we have not shared physically in the sacrament of the Eucharist, and even now many churches are sharing only the bread and not the wine. We have ceased to share the Peace by physical touch; the breakfast service has happened without a shared breakfast meal; we have not stopped for a coffee and a chat after the service. Our participation in the liturgy and the sacraments has been very different.

I wonder what you think about all this and what we might learn from it.

A recent article by Dr Charlie Bell in the journal *Theology* makes some important points. He notes the conventional (pre-pandemic) understanding of corporate worship and the celebration of the Eucharist as being essentially about physical presence and contemporaneousness – we gather together in the same place at the same time, we join together in the same actions. This suggests that something is defective when we can only ‘meet’ online in different locations, perhaps not even ‘joining’ the service at the same time; it is as if there is something unreal, or less real about the virtual world. And yet we should



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pause before reaching that conclusion. For some (the disabled, the housebound, the sick), joining the worshipping community online may be the only available option and, as a faith that places those found at the margins of society at the centre of our shared life, we should not denigrate the experience of these people. And in any event, all of our experiences come to us by complex systems of perception and representation: we can only see and hear because those perceptions are conveyed to us – just as is the case with the electricity and radio waves that convey to us an image on a screen: none of our experience is totally unmediated or immediate. Is what we see on the screen any less ‘real’ than what we see across a room? Is a conversation by phone or FaceTime any less ‘real’ than a conversation face to face?

Perhaps the greatest challenge we face, and one that the pandemic has highlighted, is how to avoid becoming individualistic in our faith: how do we hold onto the essentially corporate nature of church without gathering around the Lord’s table and sharing the Peace (and coffee and biscuits)?

As we move forward together, it would be fascinating to hear and share one another’s thoughts and feelings about the way in which we worship, and specifically about the way we share in the Eucharist: what has your experience been of online Eucharists and spiritual communion? What do you feel about receiving only the bread and not the wine of holy communion? How much does it matter to you that the Church gathers together by physical presence, and how do we include those who cannot do so? Answers on a postcard or in an email to the Rector.

Thanks to Jill Pearce for her book review for this edition. If you have something to contribute to a future edition, do please send it to the Rector.

Easy-to-follow details of how to receive this newsletter by email can be found on the St Mary’s website, or email benefice@stmarysbruton.org. If you are aware of someone who might like to receive it but does not use email, please consider printing a copy yourself and delivering it to them.

News

A Box of Delights at St Mary’s

What a delight! What a beautiful shade of red, bright but not too bright, rich but not dark. What a satisfying feel in the hands, neither too heavy nor yet lightweight, true boxes of delight containing so many familiar and much loved things. "What?" you may ask. Well, our brand new books of Hymns Ancient and Modern of course and how apposite that their very first use should coincide with a baptism, attended by some 30 or so relatives and friends of a lively 18 month old boy who was given the name of Harry.

These books must come as something of a relief to our organist, David and to our choirmaster, Harry, because the hymn numbers and words and the numbers of verses now correspond exactly with the books used by choir and organist, which the old blue hymnbooks did not.

Best of all, these books, including a few in large print, come as a gift to our Church and our thanks go to this very generous benefactor.

The hymn books are not all either. The gift includes a new Lectionary book, containing all of the prescribed bible readings for Sundays in clear print, covering the three-yearly cycle.

Our loving thanks go to our benefactor for giving us a lasting and valuable gift.

May God bless you.

Joseph of Arimathea’s stick

Locals may already know the legends associated with the tree called Glastonbury Thorn. St Leonard’s churchyard now boasts its very own specimen which has been planted and appropriately blessed and we trust it will flourish.



Sunny Coffee

A coffee morning in aid of Holy Trinity church was held in the garden of Mrs Winkley and the sun came out which made all the difference to a very successful morning. We are all most grateful to all who came and bought from the stall and bought raffle tickets and contributed to a very jolly atmosphere and also gave most generous donations so that the total raised stands at £743.30 - a record amount. Special thanks to Pat our Treasurer who did such a lot of baking as well as organising members of her family young and old to help before and after with furniture moving.

These things don't just happen, as someone once remarked! There was a lot going on behind the scenes and many thanks to all who helped in whatever way.

St Peter's, Redlynch

Christmas 2019 was the last time St Peter's opened its door to a congregation, but on August 29th 2021 the doors were open again for a Baptismal and Eucharist Service.

Theodore Coles Yaw Donkor, the youngest child to Georgina and Nick, and brother to Isabeau, was baptised, surrounded by his god-parents, parents and many friends and family, which brought together three generations of the Heal family, including great-grand parents Heather and Tony Heal and grandparents Bridget and Nicholas. Georgina grew up in Redlynch at Dairy Cottage with younger sister Stephanie and brother Louis. They have all been baptised at St Peter's which made this Service very special.

Many thanks to all those who cleaned, cut the grass, polished the woodwork and participated in the worship and prayer.

A questionnaire is being circulated around the Redlynch community to try to assess the level of support for the chapel as a place of worship and prayer, which will inform discussions about the future of the chapel. Copies of the questionnaire can be obtained from the Rector.

Our next service will be a Harvest Thanksgiving on October 24th. Hopefully we will also hold a Carol Service in December with the usual hospitality of mulled wine, mince pies and, all being well, Redlynch special sausage rolls!

Preaching invitations

The Rector has been invited to preach at Christchurch Priory on 12 September at Choral Evensong, and on 8 October at Sexey's Hospital at their annual Founder's Day service.

Book Review



Tumbling Sky

'What can miserable Christians sing? How can we pray, when most of our familiar patterns may not express how we feel when we're in dark valleys? What about when our words fail us altogether? Is relationship with God still possible?' This is the introduction to *Tumbling Sky*, written by Matt Searles and subtitled 'Psalm devotions for weary souls'. The book contains 34 short readings that start with a few verses from a psalm and then a brief commentary, with the readings ordered to take us from lament to praise.

The introduction continues:

'In the psalms, God graciously gives us words to pray back to him when our words fail. When our suffering or sorrow isolates us, we find in these words brothers and sisters - even Christ himself - who have walked similar paths before, and can gently lead us in these dark valleys.'

This book was a great help to me a couple of years ago. I had the privilege and honour of looking after my dear Mum in the weeks before she left this earth to go to her eternal home with her God. I had often prayed that God would allow me to do this and I am so thankful I did but it was very hard. One evening after I had turned the light off in Mum's bedroom and went to the lounge where I was sleeping, I felt I wanted to read my Bible but the devotional book I was reading in the evening had come to an end and I was just too tired to think about what to read. Then I remembered I had

downloaded the ebook version of *Tumbling Sky*. It seemed fitting and as I read the introduction I thought this was for me at that time.

This book helped me immensely as I was feeling tired, sad and all sorts of other emotions. The day before my Mum died the reading was Psalm 23:1-3 - familiar verses and the thought was that God 'will give his people everything they need to make it to their journey's end' - how absolutely true for my Mum and for all who trust in Christ.

I have bought copies of this book for friends and I recommend it if you want something to help you through tough times. It certainly doesn't skirt round the issues and uses the psalms to show Christians it is quite normal to feel different emotions. And in all the different situations of life we find ourselves in, God is there. We are allowed to feel sad, confused, desperate...

Ride and Stride



The annual 'Ride and stride' event, raising money for our historic churches, takes place on 11 September. Details of how to participate or support the event can be found on the Somerset Churches Trust website: <https://sometersetchurchestrust.org/ride-and-stride/>

It would be great if our churches could feature in this event next year and even better if we could put together a team of riders and/or striders to participate.

A new Rector

On 3rd October, 2021, Rt Rev'd Trevor Willmott, honorary assistant Bishop in the Diocese, and Ven. Anne Gell, Archdeacon of Wells, will induct and install the new Rector of the Benefice of Bruton. You may or may not be relieved / disappointed to learn that the new Rector will be the current Priest-in-Charge, Rev'd Jonathan Evans. So technically a new Rector, but not a change in incumbent.

The service will take place at St. Mary's Bruton at 3.00pm and all are very welcome to attend. Refreshments will be served afterwards at At the Chapel (no need to book) and we are expecting a delegation from Jonathan's former parish of Christchurch, Dorset, so you can find out from them all that they know....

The service at Pitcombe and the 11.00am service at Bruton will be cancelled in the hope that as many as possible will attend this service at 3.00pm.

Ideas

Some ideas for things we might try together, as ways of strengthening our fellowship, deepening our faith, growing our discipleship, serving our community, and having fun. If you, or anyone you know, might be interested in any of these, please let the Rector know.

- A benefice walk: a planned walk, perhaps with a shared lunch or drink and cake at the end, as an opportunity to get to know one another better, and to talk
- A short course exploring aspects of Christianity – this might be something like *Christianity Explored*, or we could use a book like Rowan Williams' "Becoming Disciples", or something bespoke

- A 'bring and share' lunch after a Sunday service – using one of the village halls, perhaps after the Benefice service on a 5th Sunday, and/or inviting our friends from other traditions (the RCs, the Methodists, the Baptists) or friends and neighbours who do not come to church
- An occasional breakfast meeting with an invited speaker
- A social gardening club – an opportunity to do something creative with as much or as little social interaction as you like

Events at Wells Cathedral

Wells Cathedral has some interesting events coming up soon:



The Green Agenda:
Choral Evensong, followed by a seminar on
5th September at 3.00pm



Millie Forrest in concert on 10th September at 7.00pm
(Tickets £10 - £30)



Jess Gillam in concert on 17th & 18th September at 7.30pm
(Tickets £15 - £40)



Festival of the Moon: 'a constellation of events'
From 12th October to 3rd November. (tickets required)

Diary Dates

4 September – Shepton Montague Fete

4 September – Pitcombe PCC meeting 9.30 am

11 September – Ride and stride event (see article above)

5 September – patronal festival at St Mary's with choir

6 September – Brewham PCC meeting 7.30 pm at Colinshays

14 September – Shepton Montague PCC meeting, 6.30 pm

19 September – Harvest Festivals at Brewham (followed by harvest lunch) and Bruton

26 September – Harvest Festivals at Pitcombe and Shepton Montague (followed by harvest supper)

3 October – Installation and Induction Service, St Mary's Bruton, 3.00 pm (followed by refreshments at At the Chapel)

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