Sunday 24th May 2020 - Ascension Day

From Simon

No more news about the timetable for the gradual opening of our church buildings, but discussions are taking place at the national level between the various faith groups and government. Whatever happens, this will not be like church as we have 'normally' experienced it.

Thanks for your continued feedback on our on-line offerings of worship. It seems that the mid week recording of Holy Communion is not very popular, so from this week we will be trying to run a Zoom service to replace it.

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Hymn: Hail the day (vv1,2,6,7)

1 Hail the day that sees him rise Alleluia!
Glorious to his native skies; Alleluia!
Christ, awhile to mortals given, Alleluia!
Enters now the highest heaven! Alleluia!

2 There the glorious triumph waits; Alleluia!
Lift your heads, eternal gates! Alleluia!
Christ hath vanquished death and sin; Alleluia!
Take the King of glory in. Alleluia!

6 Lord, though parted from our sight, Alleluia!
Far above yon azure height, Alleluia!
Grant our hearts may thither rise, Alleluia!
Seeking thee beyond the skies. Alleluia!

7 There we shall with thee remain, Alleluia!
Partners of thine endless reign; Alleluia!
There thy face unclouded see, Alleluia!
Find our heaven of heavens in thee. Alleluia!

Hymn: The head that once was crowned with thorns

1 The head that once was crowned with thorns
Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty victor’s brow.

2 The highest place that heaven affords
Is his, is his by right,
The King of kings and Lord of lords,
And heaven's eternal light;

3 The joy of all who dwell above,
The joy of all below,
To whom he manifests his love,
And grants his name to know.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjofDCZlyRY
To them the cross, with all its shame,
With all its grace is given:
Their name an everlasting name,
Their joy the joy of heaven.

They suffer with their Lord below,
They reign with him above,
Their profit and their joy to know
The mystery of his love.

The cross he bore is life and health,
Though shame and death to him;
His people’s hope, his people’s wealth,
Their everlasting theme.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSrQSCE4HJc

Collect:
Grant, we pray, almighty God, that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens, so we in heart and mind may also ascend and with him continually dwell; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

First Reading: Acts 1. 1 - 11
In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. ‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me: for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’

Second Reading: Ephesians 1. 15 - 23
I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Jesus said to the disciples, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.’ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.
Reflection on this Sunday's readings:

How have you kept in contact with people during the lockdown? If you have family nearby, maybe you have seen them, waving from outside the window or the end of the garden path. Maybe you have gone for a socially distanced walk with someone. Lots of people are phoning family and friends, and for many the phone is a lifeline. Other people are using video-conferencing tools like skype, whatsapp, facetime and zoom to keep in touch. At St Mary’s we’ve been experimenting with holding online services on zoom, so that we can meet together, at least virtually.

The ending of these conversations often makes me feel a bit sad, though. When you’re talking to someone on the phone, you hear the other person’s voice, with its characteristic phrases and inflections and pauses, and you know that the other person is at the other end of the line, and that you are linked together for the duration of the call. Then you put the phone down, and they are gone. It’s the same when we see the person on the screen of our phone or tablet. There they are - not in person, but virtually, and we can see and respond to their facial expressions and body language, as well as to what they say (and they, of course, can also see us). But then - as at the end of a zoom meeting - the screen goes blank, and they disappear.

When babies are very little, they don’t know that things they can’t see or hear or smell or touch exist. When you go out of the room, it’s as if you don’t exist any more. That’s the reason babies often cry when you put them down. As they get older, they gradually learn that you will come back and pick them up again, and, eventually, that you are still there even if they can’t see you. All babies love to play peepo/peekaboo, and this game of hiding and revealing is so important for their development, because it helps them to learn what psychologists call ‘object-persistence’.

When the disciples thought they had lost everything, in the desolation that followed the horror of the Crucifixion, Jesus returned in the glory of the Resurrection. They thought he was gone for ever: but he burst out of the tomb, and came among them, alive. Now, after forty days in which he has been mysteriously present - recognisable, living, breathing, touching and eating, but also different and unreachable - it is time for him to go again. As he did on the day of the Resurrection, on that walk to Emmaus, he teaches them to see him in the scriptures. He gives them a great task to do, and he promises that they will be sent help, power from on high, to do it. Then he blesses them - and as at that supper in the inn at Emmaus - as he blesses them, he leaves. He withdraws from their sight, ‘and is carried up to heaven’.

It’s always intrigued me that once Jesus has gone, the disciples aren’t forlorn or shocked or grief-stricken: instead, they return to Jerusalem ‘with great joy’, and spend all their time in the Temple, ‘blessing God’. What joy can there be in Jesus’s vanishing? Surely there is simply emptiness and vacancy and absence, where there had been joy. But perhaps, for once, the disciples were wise. Perhaps they had learned, during those forty days since Jesus’ return, that present or absent, he was always there. Perhaps they had begun to know that, just as in his resurrection Jesus brought heaven to walk on the earth, so something of his presence would stay with them even in his apparent absence. In the telling of this story in the first chapter of Acts, two men in white appear as Jesus is taken up, promising that he will return - that great return we look for at the end of all things.

In the meantime - which is the time in which we are now living - Jesus’ blessing continues. In a sense, it’s like the Cheshire Cat’s smile, which hung in the air after he had disappeared! Jesus continues to be with us, to abide with us, even though we cannot see him. In his absence, we know that he is still there.

The click as the telephone call ends does not mean the person at the other end has vanished; the blank screen at the end of a video call is not the extinction of the person. At the moment, we are living in times of absence, when we cannot see in person so many of those we care about. But the love of those who love us carries on when we cannot see them, and we keep faith that one day, one longed-for day, we will, with great joy, be again in their presence. Maybe, in these times when we yearn so much for the presence of those we miss, we can learn from the joy of the disciples as they return to Jerusalem to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are witnesses to the world that what seems to be lost is not gone forever, and that the God whom we cannot see still holds his hand in blessing over us, holding all that we are and all that we love in his care, until he comes again.
Hello Children  Mary Mouse has gone to ground until we can all meet together again, but she will be sending regular letters.

Sunday Club will not meet until further notice. We will be offering a regular Mary Mouse letter. For details contact Gillian, gillian.pett29@gmail.com

INTERCESSIONS
Please refer any pastoral concerns for members of the congregation or members of the local community to any member of the Ministry team including our Co-ordinator for Pastoral Services, Mrs Frances Simms. Please pray for the sick, frail, housebound and those in care. Please let the Vicar know about all cases of sickness and others for whom we should pray.

PLANNED GIVING:  If you would like to give by direct debit through the Parish Giving Scheme (our preferred option) please contact Pat Brown on - Mobile: 07811 563597  Email: patbrown2591@yahoo.co.uk. To give by other means please contact Mrs. Ann Seaman, mobile no. 07710 452647; email juliet.a.seaman@outlook.com. We are shortly going to provide a Giving Page on the parish website, which will enable you to donate directly.

Giving during the 'Lock-down': We all deeply miss the opportunity to gather together for Sunday worship and the fellowship that this provides. One of the elements of our weekly coming together is the chance to making our regular offerings of money to support the work of the parish church. For some, donations will be continuing by arrangements with our banks, but a number of you give regularly by weekly envelope or open cash donation and no longer have this opportunity. We still have all our weekly costs to meet and your valuable and regular help is essential in seeing that this is funded. Please consider if you could continue to forward your envelopes and cash by asking a friend or neighbour to put them through the Vicarage letter box. Thank you in anticipation.

ST. MARY’S GREAT SHELFORD - WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Praying together as a community
At a time when we are all missing meeting to worship together perhaps there are things that we can do to help us feel that we are still a worshipping community, and that we are all thinking of one another. Here are three simple things that we could all do to pray together for each other and our community.

1. At noon each day we could say the Lord’s Prayer. You might like to go to the front door and stand in the doorway because we are praying not just for ourselves but for the whole community.

2. If you have a candle, light it at 7pm on Sunday evenings and put it in your front window. Pray for all those who are ill, all those who are alone, and all those who are caring for others. This looks beautiful and is a sign to other people that we are keeping the light of hope for them.

3. In the evenings before bed we could pray for each other, perhaps by saying the wonderful collect for aid against all perils from the Book of Common Prayer.

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord, and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night, for the love of thy only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Services on video:
Simon and Nicola are continuing to celebrate Holy Communion and other services for the whole community. We hope to produce recordings or videos of the Parish Communion and Evensong each Sunday, and a midweek BCP Communion on Wednesdays. The videos and recordings will be on our web site. In addition you can see them on our Youtube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTxJ8yVmoDeV0r4KAyY5UYw) or on our Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/Stmarysgreatshelford/) - you don’t need to use facebook to see our posts).
As you watch you can make a Spiritual Communion. The term ‘Spiritual Communion’ has been used historically to describe the means of grace by which a person, prevented for some serious reason from sharing in a celebration of the Eucharist, nonetheless shares in the communion of Jesus Christ. The form of prayer below offers Christians an opportunity to give thanks for their communion with him, particularly at times when they would ordinarily be present at the Eucharist.

The Book of Common Prayer instructs us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly ‘eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ’, although we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves. Making a Spiritual Communion is particularly fitting for those who cannot receive the sacrament at the great feasts of the Church, and it fulfils the duty of receiving Holy Communion ‘regularly, and especially at the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun or Pentecost’ (Canon B 15).

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members. In making our communion spiritually, we are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, ‘I am the Bread of Life’.

**Recorded Services:** At the present moment only one designated person is allowed to access a church building, accompanied by someone from their own household if necessary. Simon is the designated person for St Mary's, so he is able to record (with Mary's assistance) services from there. Nicola is recording services from her home.

**Daily HOPE:** This is an excellent new national Church of England initiative for those who are especially isolated and do not have access to the internet. Launched last Sunday, Daily HOPE is freephone line, available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044. Callers will hear a special greeting from the Archbishop of Canterbury before being able to choose from a range of options, including Prayer During the Day and Night Prayer updated daily, from Common Worship, and a recording of the Church of England’s weekly national online service. A section called Hymn Line will also offer callers a small selection of hymns, updated daily. An option entitled ‘Hymns We Love’, provides a hymn and reflection.

**Congratulations to Mary Marsh:** Sincere congratulations to Mary as she celebrates her 103rd birthday this Mon.

**Congratulations to Dorothy Doel:** Congratulations also to Dorothy who celebrated her 80th birthday this week.

**Doris Johnson RIP:** Doris lived with husband Roy in De Freville Rd.; Roy died in 2017 and recently Doris's health deteriorated sharply. She was in Addenbrooke's for a time, then latterly in a care home in Huntingdon; she died there on 7th May aged 92. We pray for her sister Margaret and other family members at this sad time. Doris's funeral will take place at Cam Valley Crematorium on Wed. 3rd June.

**Nicola's Last Sunday:** Many of you will know that Nicola has been appointed Rector of Cottingham in the diocese of York, so her time with us is coming to an end. Her last Sunday with us will be 7th June, Trinity Sunday. She and the family will be moving to Cottingham over the summer, as soon as the house there is ready. Because of current circumstances, we won’t be able to say ‘farewell and thanks’ in person, but we’ll do our best to say goodbye and thank her for her contribution during her time here.

**Christian Aid Week:** Christian Aid Week concluded on 17th May. Normally we would have made envelopes available in church, but of course this year this is not possible. The need for support is all the more urgent, as Covid-19 starts to take hold in Africa, so your generous giving to Christian Aid Week is imperative this year. You can donate direct to Christian Aid Week online by visiting this site:-


If you do not have access to the internet, please put your **cash donation** into an envelope clearly marked 'Christian Aid Week’ and drop it into the Vicarage letterbox. We will ensure that the donations received go direct to the appeal this year. Thank you for your generosity.

**Cambridge City Foodbank:** The Foodbank still very much needs our support at this difficult time. As St Mary's is closed until further notice, and Great Shelford Free Church are offering a collection point outside their front door, please can food donations be left there for the time being. You can also donate money directly to the
Foodbank; the details of how to do so are on the Cambridge City Foodbank website.
https://cambridgecity.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/

Kneelers: A group of ladies, and at least one gentleman, have started work on some new kneelers for the church. The cost per kneeler is £54; if you would like to make a contribution, maybe with a dedication, please contact Mrs Margaret Stamper, 845134. Please also contact Margaret if you would like to sew a kneeler yourself; apparently it is very therapeutic!

Stop Press! The completed kneelers are being stored at the Vicarage until we are able to dedicate them during public worship; there are now over 26 and they look splendid. Well done to all those who have been hard at work.

Please note that the church is closed at present, so regretfully visits will not be possible.

Vicar: simon@thetalbotts.co.uk
The Rev’d Simon Talbott 01223 847068

Assistant curate: curate@stmarysgreatshelford.org
The Rev’d Dr Nicola Bown 07414 595160

Contact Churchwarden: stella.nettleton@btinternet.com
Mrs. Stella Nettleton 07763 887953

Reader/Licensed Lay Minister:
Mrs. Maureen Dobson d-mdobson@hotmail.co.uk
01223 840076

Parish Administrator:
pagekatharin@gmail.com
Mrs. Katharin Page 07710 518220

Pastoral Services Co-ordinator
francesjsimms47@gmail.com
Mrs. Frances Simms 01223 845895

Children’s work contact:
gillian.pett29@gmail.com
Gillian Pett

Applications for baptisms, marriages and the calling of Banns of marriage should be made please to the Parish Administrator.

Please note that at the moment we are unable to hold public services in church, so weddings and Baptisms are not permitted (unless in very specific emergency situations and probably only in a hospital or hospice setting). It is unclear at present when we can open the church again, so any forward dates agreed may have to be changed. 24/05/20