

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As you read this, we will be not too far away from Advent and Christmas, and then of course the end of a year which has been for all of us like nothing we have ever experienced before. Along of course with the understandable questions “how has this pandemic happened, and why?” And the almost inevitable “where does God figure in all of this?” People often ask me about the God of Old Testament, seeing him as angry and vengeful as he watched people rejecting him and then punished them severely for breaking the covenant they had together. And more than one person has said to me that this pandemic is the wrath of God, nature biting back for the way we’ve treated His gift of Creation. But even in the Old Testament we see that God never abandoned his people—he always relented and brought them back into the fold. And in the New Testament of course we see the vulnerability of God—the helpless child dependent on human care and love. The young itinerant Rabbi relying on the help and hospitality of others. A man who cries inconsolably at the death of a friend; and a man who finally, abandoned by everyone, went humiliated, afraid and alone to torture and death. A man buried in a borrowed grave. Yet it was in this extreme helplessness and vulnerability that he defeated, on our behalf, a greater enemy than we face today.

And if you want to talk of the wrath, or the anger, of God, just look at the way Rabbi Jonathan Sacks described it in a conversation with Steve Chalke; “it is perhaps better, and far more accurate to understand God’s anger as his anguish—a dimension of his love, but never an emotion in opposition to it.” God grieves and suffers with us, because He IS love and his love is redemptive, not vindictive. He stands with us through every time of trial and sorrow and is close to those in anguish. As St Augustine said, ‘God is closer to us than we are to ourselves’. And in a world that sometimes threatens to overwhelm us it’s important that we don’t lose sight of the things we know as we try to get to grips with questions we can’t answer. I find a great deal of comfort today in some words that Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians— “do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your petitions to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (ch4: v6-7)

And we have been here before, haven't we? The world has seen plagues, two major world wars, a Spanish flu pandemic, and now this. And once again the determination to overcome has surfaced. 2000 years ago faith in Christ empowered ordinary people to do extraordinary things, and if there has been any kind of upside to this pandemic, perhaps it's been in the way that we've also seen ordinary people do extraordinary things. Captain Tom. Frank Mills, a 6 years old with Spina Bifida walking 10 metres a day to raise money for the NHS. The dedication of those caring for the sick and vulnerable. The selflessness that's come to the fore in our benefice and our communities as people look out for each other. All signs of hope that God will bring peace and calm to his troubled world- that as he so often does He will bring good out of evil. There is much talk of when we will "get back to normal", but there is also a definite groundswell of opinion that the "old normal" is not fit for purpose.

So as we look towards Advent let's keep our focus on those things we know. We know that our Carol Service and Christmas services won't be the same this year, but in our hearts we will still welcome the Christ child as we have done in years past; we will still give thanks for the gift of salvation to a broken world. Christ calmed storms, cast out demons and healed the sick, and he was called Immanuel- "Christ with us." And that's something else we know-He is with us now and has been for always. His part is-and has always been- to save. Ours is to trust.

God bless,

Richard

WARMLEY WARBLINGS

We remember in our regular prayers, those of our church family who have been unwell, thinking in particular of Mervyn and Lil Little, Martin Pullin, Margaret Hill, Beryl Holder, John Eames, we wish them all well.

As usual, we remember all of our friends who are in residential or nursing homes at this time, Grace Watson, Eileen Penny and Marjorie Cox. They are in our thoughts especially at this time when visits to them are restricted or even forbidden.

We are very sad to report that John Short has passed away, many of our older church members will remember and have fond memories of John who in years gone by was a regular member of our Sunday evening congregation and a well-known local person in Oldland.

We also send our love and sympathy to the family and friends of The Rev. Leslie Jones who passed away aged ninety-six recently. Our thoughts and prayers are with his son Martin and daughter Maggie, Martin was often seen in St. Barnabas Church and for a while was a member of the choir. Leslie was a vicar of several parishes including Lockleaze, Abbots Leigh and Bedminster

We send our love and sympathy also to Karen Mayo whose mother Rita Jones sadly passed away recently. She is in our thoughts and prayers along with husband Tim and all of their family.

For all of those three people above we pray that they may rest in peace and rise in glory

AUTUMN FESTIVE FAYRE

A reminder that this will take place in a Covid-Safe environment in our church hall on Saturday 14th November from 12 noon until 2pm. If you would like more details please contact Nicola or Margaret on 9616629

Brian Draper



"Given the state of our heating system, you'd think the vicar would be all for it!"

NOVEMBER 1st: ALL SAINTS DAY THE FEAST DAY OF ALL THE REDEEMED

All Saints, or All Hallows, is the feast of all the redeemed, known and unknown, who are now in heaven. When the English Reformation took place, the number of saints in the calendar was drastically reduced, with the result that All Saints' Day stood out with a prominence that it had never had before.

This feast day first began in the East, perhaps as early as the 5th century, as commemorating 'the martyrs of the whole world'. A Northern English 9th century calendar named All Hallows as a principal feast, and such it has remained. Down the centuries devotional writers have seen in it the fulfilment of Pentecost and indeed of Christ's redemptive sacrifice and resurrection.

The saints do not belong to any religious tradition, and their lives and witness to Christ can be appreciated by all Christians. Richard Baxter, writing in the 17th century, wrote the following:

*He wants not friends that hath thy love,
And made converse and walk with thee,
And with thy saints here and above,
With whom for ever I must be...*

*As for my friends, they are not lost;
The several vessels of thy fleet,
Though parted now, by tempests tost,
Shall safely in thy haven meet....*

*The heavenly hosts, world without end,
Shall be my company above;
And thou, my best and surest Friend,
Who shall divide me from thy love?**

1,255 ancient English churches were dedicated to All Saints – a number only surpassed by those dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

NOVEMBER 2nd: ALL SOULS' DAY A TIME OF RECKONING WITH THE PAST

The early Church was slow to dedicate a liturgical day to offering prayers and masses to commemorate the faithful departed. But in time prayers were offered on behalf of dead monks, that they might attain 'the Beatific Vision' through purification, which the Church later described as Purgatory. Odilo, the powerful abbot of Cluny, (d 1049) decreed that All Souls' Day should follow the feast of All Saints' Day.

At least four ancient English dedications are known, the most famous of which are All Souls College, Oxford and the church in Langham Place in London.

In bygone centuries All Souls' Day was certainly uncomfortable for anyone who had wronged a person who had then died. For it was believed that souls in purgatory could appear on earth on this day, in the form of ghosts, witches or toads, to haunt anyone who had wronged them in life.

On a more cheerful note, it was also believed that you could help the dead on this day by almsgiving in cash or in kind. Some of these beliefs seem to have been caught up in the popular customs of Hallowe'en.

When the Reformation came, the Protestants disregarded the idea of Purgatory, and this feast day remained with the Roman Catholic Church.

ALL IN THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER

It was:

500 years ago, on 28th Nov 1520 that the Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan sailed into the South Pacific and named the waters the Pacific Ocean.

200 years ago, on 28th Nov 1820, that Friedrich Engels, German socialist philosopher and social scientist who collaborated with Karl Marx to found modern communism and co-write the Communist Manifesto.

100 years ago, on 11th Nov 1920, that following World War 1, Britain and France held ceremonies to dedicate a national monument known as the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. The British monument is at Westminster Abbey in London.

100 years ago, on 21st Nov 1920 that Bloody Sunday took place during the Irish War of Independence. 31 people were killed in a day of violence that began when the IRA shot dead 14 British soldiers in Dublin. The British then opened fire on a Gaelic football crowd, killing 14 people. Three Irish prisoners held in Dublin Castle were also killed.

80 years ago, on 5th Nov 1940 that Franklin D Roosevelt became the only US President to win a third term in office.

80 years ago, on 14th Nov 1940 that German Luftwaffe bombers virtually destroyed the city of Coventry, including its medieval cathedral.

80 years ago, on 15th Nov 1940 that all the Jews in Warsaw were transferred to the Warsaw Ghetto – about 400,000 of them.

60 years ago, on 2nd Nov 1960 that a British jury cleared Penguin Books of obscenity for publishing D H Lawrence's novel Lady Chatterley's Lover. This event is often considered the beginning of the permissive society in Britain.

60 years ago, on 8th Nov 1960 that John F Kennedy was elected as the 35th President of the USA.

40 years ago, on 4th Nov 1980 that Ronald Reagan was elected as the 40th President of the USA.

40 years ago, on 21st Nov 1980 that American TV soap opera Dallas revealed 'Who shot J.R.' after keeping viewers in suspense for eight months.

30 years ago, on 7th Nov 1990 that Mary Robinson became the first female President of Ireland.

30 years ago, on 22nd Nov 1990 that Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announced her resignation. She was succeeded by John Major on 28th Nov.

25 years ago, on 20th Nov 1995 that Princess Diana admitted that she had committed adultery, and spoke openly about her separation from the Prince of Wales in a frank interview for the BBC.

20 years ago, on 7th Nov 2000 that George W Bush was elected as the 43rd President of the USA, though the result of the election would not be known for over a month because of disputed votes in Florida.

15 years ago, on 30th Nov 2005 that John Sentamu became Archbishop of York. He was the first black archbishop in the Church of England.

CHURCH ONLINE

Among the number of new concepts introduced to us by the coronavirus pandemic is the idea of 'church online,' both among the Christian population and those less familiar with 'church.' Many ministers have commented that, while they may initially have struggled, the new format has worked, and has drawn in people who would not normally go to church; theirs or anyone else's.

One Church of England Diocese carried out a survey across its many benefices, receiving some 180 replies to its questions. Five-sixths, 84%, had made some kind of online provision for its work, with three-quarters, 76%, providing worship services. Over half did such more than once a week!

In total, the online church respondents had almost 1,300 participants on a Sunday, but these were augmented by a further almost 800 who tuned in subsequently. Normally, if you aren't at a church service, you've missed it. Not now! To have so many who followed the service subsequently, an increase of over three-fifths, 62%, of the original Sunday watchers, must say something about the usefulness of this format, popularity, and the convenience of being able to worship at an alternative time.

Do online services 'work'? For many, the overall answer is positive. "Although online services have (a number) of limitations, people can meet with God. Two people have come to faith through online services," wrote one minister. It enables the church to re-connect with those who have moved away, and not found another church to attend. "It's easier for people to come than to walk through a church door," said another.

"We have overcome being a physically dispersed rural church. We are now a church built on a praying community across 30 different people praying together morning and evening," was the testimony of another. Housebound people, providing they have the necessary facilities and technological 'know-how,' can also participate.

Is it worth all the bother? Evidently so, as over half, 55%, of the churches aim to continue online services once lockdown is over. Only 7% said they wouldn't, with the remaining 38% uncertain.

Two-fifths of the churches, 41%, found that their numbers watching the service had increased over the weeks of lockdown, but this was offset by the 45% who found their numbers decreased. The remaining 14% said they had stayed the same.

Overall, have online services been beneficial? In the technical sense, yes, as "we are more capable than we thought at first," said one respondent, but spoke for many. So new technical skills *have* been learned. "Planning online is very different – it needs to be engaging and concise," said one person, so teaching skills presumably need to be sharpened also.

Faith-wise, as mentioned above, some have come to faith. Some have 'come back' to church. Many have watched for the first time. Some have watched services from other churches. Others, though, will have been put off by the format. "Online services are no substitute for a church service," wrote one leader, and another said, "There is opportunity to reach wider, but more difficult to go deeper."

THANKYOU

I would like to thank you all for your cards and kind messages sent to me and my family following the death of my mum. Also, to those who never forget mum and who always asked how she was during her eighteen years battle with alzheimer's. It gave so much comfort to me,

With love,
God bless
Karen Mayo

THE UNSUNG HEROES WHO HELP US SAY GOODBYE

No one likes to talk about death. Especially during a pandemic that's impacting everyone on the planet. And yet for some people, death is their life's work. It's their vocation.

In fact, helping bereaved families and friends say a personal goodbye to their loved ones is what motivates them, day after day.

They are the funeral directors and the staffs of our local crematoria and cemeteries. Often forgotten or out of mind, the men and women who arrange and service funerals perform a vital role.

Vicars and other ministers of religion work closely with these key workers. We see the care they take to help families arrange the funerals they want for their loved ones. We see the strict health regulations they have had to follow during this pandemic and the increased pressures on them. We see the long hours and dedication.

Yet, after one funeral, an undertaker confided to me how useless he felt while NHS staff were at the frontline of fighting coronavirus. I replied that what he did was essential too, and massively important during these difficult days.

Another undertaker told me how he helped families cope with the restrictions on the numbers of mourners at funerals, currently set at 30. He had slowly driven his hearse past golf clubs, pubs and old people's homes where friends – unable to attend the services – had said their goodbyes.

In the funerals I have taken during the pandemic, I have been much impressed by the care and sensitivity shown by funeral directors and crematorium staff. Often, while they have been under much stress I applaud the way that crematoria have made it easier for mourners who cannot attend funerals to view the services via the internet. This seems to have become common practice across the country. During the pandemic, this 'optional extra' has become a key part of the service.

The feedback I have had from mourners watching from just outside the chapel, or across the world, has been very positive.

Christian ministers work closely with the bereaved family and the funeral director to ensure each funeral is very personal to the deceased, and an occasion they will remember long after the day has passed.

We want to bring a message of hope at funerals. I like to say that love never dies, and that the love we have for someone goes on beyond the grave.

As the funeral section on the Church of England website states: *“When someone dies, although we can’t see the person we love anymore, Christians believe that through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we will see that person again. It might be in a very different form, in a very different way, but that is the Christian hope, and that is the message everyone will hear when they come to a Church of England funeral.”*

Meanwhile, it’s the care of undertakers and all those who arrange and conduct funerals that help us say our goodbyes.

NOVEMBER 6th: WILLIAM TEMPLE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

During the Second World War, Winston Churchill was Britain's Prime Minister. At the same time, William Temple was Archbishop of Canterbury. While Churchill led the country against Germany, Temple encouraged the British people to trust the Lord for their deliverance and strength. Like Churchill, Temple was a great leader, a gifted orator and a prolific writer. He was also a theologian and social activist.

Temple was born on 15th October 1881 in Exeter, Devon. He was educated at Rugby School and Balliol College, Oxford, from 1900 to 1904. He loved the music of Bach; the poetry of Browning and Shelley, and Shakespeare. He was an avid reader and possessed a near-photographic memory.

He became president of the Oxford Union and after graduation, was a lecturer in philosophy at Queen's College, Oxford. He was a member of the debating society and was a skilled and balanced debater. Following his ordination in 1909, and priesting in 1910, Temple was headmaster of Repton School for four years. He married Frances Anson in 1916. They were childless.

From 1921-29 Temple was Bishop of Manchester. During this time he was seen as a pioneer of the Ecumenical Movement and gradually became a national figure. In 1926 he urged the British government to seek a negotiated agreement to the General Strike. Temple excelled as a moderator; a teacher and a preacher and his appointment as Archbishop of York (1929-40) was a popular one. His influence also led to the formation of the British Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. During the 2nd World War he jointly founded the Council of Christians and Jews to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice in Britain.

As Archbishop of Canterbury (1942-44) Temple became an outspoken advocate of social reform and became involved in the campaign against unemployment, poverty and poor housing. He believed in the rights of all people, whether rich or poor, and was a leading force for social justice. He was grounded in the problems of the working man and in his book *Christianity and Social Order* (1942) he shared his vision for all to have access to healthcare, education and decent housing. His radical thinking and activism played a foundational role in the formation of the British Welfare State.

Temple died aged 63 at Westgate-on-Sea, Kent on 26th October 1944. He was the first Primate of All England to be cremated and his ashes were buried in the cloister garden of Canterbury Cathedral. He is the last Archbishop of Canterbury to have died while in office.

A LITTLE HUMOUR

Fire in church

The town's fire prevention officer was conducting a health and safety course at the local church. The officer said to the minister: "Now imagine this: it is a Sunday morning and you have a number of people, spread socially distanced, throughout your church building. Some are in the choir stalls, some are in the kitchen, and some are in the nave. Suddenly, a big fire breaks out. What are the first steps you would take?"

The minister thought carefully for a moment. "Really big ones," he said.

The congregation

A minister was considering a move to a busy town-centre church, and wanted to know what the congregation was like, and especially the church council. So, he rang the minister who had just retired from that church. The retiring minister hesitated a moment and then replied: "Some of them are wise; some are otherwise."

Rooms

When the vicar moved his family into the large Victorian vicarage, a member of the congregation asked the young son how he liked his new home. "It's great," the little boy replied. "At last I have my own room, Mike has his own room, Jemma has her own room, and Bobby has his own room. But poor Mum is still in with Dad."

Don't worry

A little boy was told that he should try and be good, and that he could ask God for help with this. So he prayed: "Lord, please make me good, if you can. But if you can't, don't worry about it. I'm having a real good time like I am."

Family tree

At a drinks party at a wealthy golf club, the conversation turned to the subject of ancestry. "Of course, we trace our family back to coming over with William the Conqueror," observed one lady with satisfaction. She turned to a second woman, who was new to the club, and asked, "What about you dear? Can you go back very far?" "Not very far," came the reply. "You see, all the early family records were lost in the Flood."

Champagne

My husband and I were delighted the day we finally bought our first house. After years of renting, it was wonderful to own our own home. Our minister even gave us a bottle of champagne to mark the occasion. But in the hustle and bustle of getting moved in, his champagne was put in a cupboard and forgotten.

Months later, we held a Baptism party for our third child. Wine flowed until, running short, we suddenly remembered the housewarming gift of champagne. So, in front of our guests, I opened the attached card from the minister and read it aloud: “Dave, take good care of it – this one is really yours!”

Medical name

The curate told his doctor that he was worried because he just wasn’t able to do all the things around the parish that his vicar expected him to do. When the examination was complete, he said, “I’m prepared for the worst, doctor. Just tell me in plain English what is wrong with me.” “Well, in plain English,” the doctor replied, “you’re just lazy.” “Okay,” said the curate. “Now give me the medical term so I can tell my vicar.”

First Communion

My three-year-old niece, Kelly, went with a neighbour’s little girl to church for her First Communion practice. The minister had the children cup their hands, and then went solemnly down the line, giving each child a piece of bread, and intoning: “God be with you”.

This made quite an impression on Kelly. She came home and told her mother to cup her hands and bend down. Kelly took a piece of bread from her sandwich, placed it in her mother’s hands, and whispered, in her most angelic voice, “God will get you.”

Objects of faith

A teacher gave her class a ‘show and tell’ assignment. Each youngster was asked to bring in an object to share with the class that represented their religion.

Benjamin got up in front of the class and said: “I’m Jewish, and this is a Star of David.”

Mary stood up next and said: “I’m a Catholic and this is a Rosary.”

Then Tim stood up. “I’m a Baptist, and this is a casserole.”