Two Former Rectors of Iver Heath

JUNE
2020 AD

BEXHILL PARISH TEAM
WHO’s WHO

Clergy
Revd David Reynish, Team Rector, St. Peter’s (217203)

Parish Children's and Families Worker Miss Janine Scothern (539167)

Hon. Assistant Clergy Revd Keith Williams (734093)
Revd Mel Durrant (217468)

Readers Miss Alison Marchant (216466)
Mr Paul Abnett (213816)

Parish church wardens
Miss Cathy Gillman (224996)
Mrs Ruth Gregory (218328)

St. Peter’s Wardens Miss Cathy Gillman (224996)
Mr Chris Miles (222407)

St. Michael’s Wardens Mrs Ruth Gregory (218328)
Mrs Lorraine McGuire (212739)
e-mail; lolslollymcguire@gmail.com

St. Peter’s Director of Music Mr Anthony Wilson (07729 206721)

St. Peter’s Verger Mrs Helen Cunliffe (844916)

PCC Secretary Revd. Stephanie Prosser (213360)

PCC Treasurer Mr Stephen Parry

St. Peter’s Treasurer Mr Alan Simmons

St. Michael’s Treasurer Mr John Hudson

Electoral Roll Officer Mrs Diane Meladio (07484 265960)

St. Peter’s Bell Ringers Mr Roy Cox (211473)
Mr Richard Kennard (213849)

St. Peter’s Stewardship Officer: Mr Anthony Wilson

St. Peter’s Community Centre Office Warden - Mrs Heidi Miles (219908)

St. Michael’s Community Centre Bookings - Mrs Judith Hattam (730082)

Parish Minibus Enquiries Mr Chris Miles (222407)

Church Services are currently suspended until further notice

St. Peter’s

Sunday
8.00am Holy Eucharist
9.45am Parish Eucharist /Time For God
6.00pm Choral Evensong

Weekday Eucharist
9.00am Monday and Tuesday
10.00am Wednesday

Daily Evening Prayer 5.30pm

St. Michael’s

Sunday
9.30am All Age Half Hour Service (except 1st & 3rd Sunday)
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Family Communion (1st)
Family Service (3rd)

Weekday Eucharist
11.00am Wednesday

Parish Office - Mrs Caroline Young - Rector’s Secretary
St. Peter’s Stables, Church Street, TN40 2HE

Don’t forget to check out our parish websites
www.stpetersbexhill.org.uk www.stmichaelsbexhill.org
June 2020

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PARISH OFFICE

Following government guidelines the Parish Office is closed until further notice. I can however be contacted EVERYDAY, either by email parish.office@stpetersbexhill.org.uk or phone 07508 680404, as I’m working from home.

Please let me know if you need any help or even if you just want someone to talk to during these challenging times.

Caroline Young, Rector’s Secretary

Copy for next month’s magazine by 8th June
please email to parish.office@stpetersbexhill.org.uk
Pastoral Letter for Pentecost

It will not have escaped your attention, that this year is a leap year – and being part of the Diocese of Chichester with St Richard as its patron saint, it won’t have surprised you that the hope has been expressed that 2020 will be the year that we see God more clearly, love Him more dearly, and follow Him more nearly.

However, the elephant in the room at the present time is of course the global Covid-19 pandemic – which is having profound effects on our lives and our social interactions.

At the beginning of Lent, awareness of the issue was entering our collective consciousness, and by the time the lockdown began, we were all aware of the effects of the virus on mortality rates. At the time of writing, we await the governmental review of the lockdown restrictions; but it seems fair to assume that the ability to worship as a community in our parish church is still some way off. So, let’s try and put some type of spiritual perspective on things from both a Christian point of view, and a contextual view of the times we are all living through.

In one sense, although 2020 is indeed a leap year, the Christian may see that every year is a LEAP year, being that we all travel through the successive periods of Lent, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost.

Lent, of course, is a period of self-discipline – where we might examine or assess our lives against our spiritual teachings, and make increased use of scriptures and prayer to that end.

Easter is the ground-changing event which transforms our perspective. Nothing can ever be the same again.

Ascension is the feast, where earthly purpose completed, Jesus returns to his Heavenly Father.

Pentecost, is that equipping and enabling power of the Holy Spirit to apply our God-given gifts and abilities to the continuing mission of His church.
It may be observed that there may be a similarity between Easter and Pentecost, looking at things from the disciples’ perspective – namely that from Good Friday and from the Ascension, they had little idea of what precisely would come next. They had no comprehension of what it meant for our Lord to have to die and be raised again; as they would also have had little clue regarding Jesus asking his Father to send a Counsellor, the spirit of truth.

However, Jesus did rise from the dead on Easter Day - and the Holy Spirit did come down from heaven on that first Pentecost; and with these two events, both the disciples’ landscape and our landscape has irreversibly changed.

It is appropriate to say here, that awareness of our own lives against the template of God’s teaching, and the change in that awareness due to Easter and Pentecost, is not just a one-off annual event – but one of continual assessment or if you prefer, periodic re-assessment.

So, from a personal spiritual perspective, we must be always be prepared - we must be ready to discern God’s will for us, and we must be prepared for the enabling changes that Pentecost brings to us. And we must pray individually for the equipping and enabling changes to happen to us collectively as a community as well.

But we are living through ground changing times as the world community, as God’s creation – and as daily routine begins to expand from lockdown restrictions, we must be ready as this Parish community to meet the challenges that the changed life will make on all of us.

We have not been in church for two months now – but thanks to technology and an able churchwarden, we have been able to be church in a different way. When public worship eventually returns, we must still cater in a way that brings in new worshippers, new faith enquirers.

So, may I suggest to you, a different set of three ‘R’s (to the usual Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic), which may help shape our collective moving forward?

Firstly, Re-Assess. Where are we as a community? Are we still fit for God’s continuing purpose of Mission?
Secondly, Re-purpose. If after re-assessment, we need to change - then let us embrace what is necessary, and adapt our approach to changed circumstances.

Thirdly, Re-engage. Do what it says on the tin. Connect with people where they now find themselves. Acknowledge past circumstances, but move forward in the hope that the risen Christ gives us in the power of the Spirit.

So, in summary.

Re-assess.
Re-purpose.
Re-engage.

May we travel with our risen Lord into His glorious future.

Amen.

*Paul Abnett Ob. OSB*

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**CONGRATULATIONS**

Congratulations to Fr. Michael Bailey who has been appointed as parish priest of St. Stephen's Lewisham in the diocese of Southwark. As Patron of All Saints' Sidley I had the honour and privilege of presenting Fr. Michael twice to All Saints' Sidley - first as Priest in Charge with the Bishop of Chichester presiding and most recently as Vicar with the Archdeacon Hastings officiating. Every Blessing for your new ministry Father Michael.
Time For God

Faith ~ Fellowship ~ Friendship
Founded Sept. 2000

~ One of the many Services offered for you at St Peter’s ~
~ on Email and St Peter’s Facebook Page ~

During these difficult times, we are here for you at St Peter’s. Whether you wish to take part in one of our virtual Services through email or St Peter’s Facebook page or whether you wish to contact someone just for a chat, please do look at the contact details in this Parish Mag.

TFG is available for everyone through email or our St Peter’s Facebook page and, again, please do contact someone if you have not yet found us in whatever form you wish.

Rev’d Mel and Elizabeth and Peter Ewen led some wonderful Services throughout April and May by email and Facebook. We had such themes as Doubting Thomas and Jesus, our Shepherd.

Lots to look forward to in June. Do please make sure you have “Time for God” and take part – we strive to continue to be a connected Church of the people of God.

Dear Lord, let us all remember we are all part of your Church.

TFG every Sunday
on Email and on St Peter’s Facebook Page
Look in this Parish Mag for contact details
LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS

Thank goodness we have memories to remind us of past sights, sounds and experiences which have cheered us on our way. So, I’d like to share with you five sites that have raised my spirits and delighted my soul.

THE TEMPLE MOUNT – JERUSALEM

In the 1990s I was fortunate enough to have visited Jerusalem and the Holy Land on no less than five separate occasions. Apart from the Sea of Galilee the view of the Holy City from the Mount of Olives is truly amazing. One can see the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built over the very tomb in which our Blessed Lord’s body was lain prior to the glorious resurrection on the first Easter Day. However, dominating the site is the Temple Mount which is now dominated by the Golden Dome of the Islamic building built over the very rock where, by tradition, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Issac until his hand was stayed by the angel. The view is from across the Kidron Valley to the city walls of the ancient city which is placed right at the very centre of the world on the Mappa Mundi in Hereford cathedral. It has been one of the privileges of my life to go on several pilgrimages to Jerusalem and walk in the footsteps of Jesus along the Via Dolorosa.

THE POTALA PALACE – LHASA – TIBET

I well remember flying from Peking to Lhasa because I was given the visa containing the names of all 14 travellers. It was quite a business getting them all through security. I was the last one through. The Security lady kept looking at the visa and looking at me – my name was written in English, but my occupation was written down in Chinese characters. Eventually she spoke in a very abrupt manner – “Are you a Wicker?” she said “Yes, I’m a Wicker” I replied and so she let me through. On landing in Lhasa at so high an altitude when the air is very thin it made me feel quite tipsy and one lady among the party was seriously ill as a result of the lack of oxygen. As is my custom I rose very early and went to explore the city seeking out the 1000 room Potala Palace, former home of the
Dalai Lama until he fled the city at the time of the Chinese invasion. The Potala is one of the most impressive building in the entire world – like many buildings which seek to impress it is built on a hill. I will never forget the guided tour around the palace. The poor lady who felt so ill had recovered sufficiently to join the palace tour but unfortunately to reach the entrance one has to ascent flight after flight of stairs and as we reached the entrance she immediately collapsed and so never saw the interior.

**THE TAJ MAHAL**

I’ve been to see the Taj Mahal in India twice – the first time with Jenny and so, inevitable we had our photographs taken on Princess Diana’s bench in front of the mausoleum. The second time, like Diana before me, I was alone! Having been to China, Tibet, and Nepal before reaching India I was fairly whacked and wasn’t too keen to take the long train journey to see that great symbol of India a second time. However, my then Churchwarden - Jenny Elliott – asked if I would take her Teddy bear Augustine to have his photograph taken in front of the monument. So, just before we entered the complex the guide issued a stern warning that certain items were not allowed inside the complex. These included guns, explosives, sharp objects and cuddly toys! “Why not cuddly toys”, I protested? In case a bomb is concealed inside them replied the guide. So, having travelled thousands of miles Augustine never did have his photograph taken against that great symbol of romantic love.

**GOR VIRAP – ARMENIA**

The very first nation to be converted to Christianity was Armenia in the very early three hundreds. The person to achieve this premier conversion was Gregory the Illuminator. Alas, when he arrived proclaiming this new religion about Jesus being the Son of God and the Second Person of the
Holy Trinity the locals didn’t take too kindly to him and so kept him in a dungeon at Gor Virap for seven whole years. Eventually, when he was released from prison, he was given an audience of the king who was converted to the Christian Faith along with all his people. Today, a small Armenia church and monastery are built over the dungeon. I couldn’t resist climbing down the ladder into the place where Gregory was incarcerated for so many years. In the background to Gor Virap is Mount Ararat – the dormant twin peaked volcano upon which Noah’s Arc alighted after the Flood.

DURHAM CATHEDRAL

As Armenians place paintings of Mount Ararat in their homes so too many homes in the North East contain pictures of Durham cathedral – that great symbol of the North. There are no finer views than that of Durham cathedral approached by train from the south. On the journey to Balmoral Queen Victoria ensured that the royal train stop at Durham just so that she could take in the vista of the cathedral build on its rocky tree lined peninsular. To see the cathedral from the exterior is one thing but to actually enter this great Christian fane is quite another! Those massive Normal pillars and the earliest rib vault ceiling in the world. The resting place of two of God’s great saints – St. Cuthbert behind the high altar and Bede in the Galilee Chapel. No matter where I travel throughout the world – Durham cathedral will always be my spiritual home, where are your Sacred Special Places?

EVERY BLESSING,

FATHER DAVID
The Green Spot

God’s Creation

Appreciation of nature has been phenomenal this lock-down spring. From Roger and Ruth’s sea and sky scenes on their cycle rides up Galley Hill, to this butterfly shared with me by Mark Boulton from Gloustershire.

To my delight the sparrow gang have returned to our neighbourhood gardens. They nested under the eaves of my neighbour’s house and the noisy chatter of several families is a joy to hear. Fruit tree blossom was stunning and with the warmth in April the fruit set well. And on city pavements some, out on their exercise hour, wrote in chalk the names of wild plants thriving in the nooks and crannies of the urban jungle.

This awareness of the natural world is obvious in many of the gospel stories Jesus told. From the glory and majesty of the lilies of the field in spring to the humble sparrows. Those sparrows may have only been worth two for a penny in the human markets but they too, like the lilies, have value in the eyes of God.

With all this natural beauty around us it can be difficult to remember how much is under threat. But the loss of species and the destruction of our natural world continues – as do efforts to protect it. There was to have been a United Nations Global Nature conference on how to halt the worldwide loss of biodiversity in China this October, but like the climate conference in Glasgow, it has been postponed. Something to keep an eye on is the UK’s new Environmental Bill to replace EU laws protecting nature which will be making its way through Parliament in the coming months.

Our own local council has really good plans to protect our local biodiversity and to plant many more trees throughout Rother. Have a look at the Action Plans in their Environmental Strategy on the RDC website.

Barbara Echlin
A Taste of the Past

Queues, I can do queues I’m British. I was standing in a queue for the green grocer in Western Road when a gentleman, of about my age, came up and stood the socially acceptable distance behind me and told me that he had queued at the fishmongers and the butchers and now he was queuing to get his green groceries and it was a bit like the old days before supermarkets as we now know them.

That made me think of when I was a child and going shopping in Leatherhead, Surrey with my mother or my grandmother when we would queue at counters inside the double fronted shop that was Sainsbury’s visiting separate counters for meat, cheese, bread etc.

Or my favourite going to the Woolworths store, with once again separate queues for the tills for various counters. My favourite was the biscuit counter where you selected a mixture of different biscuits and were served from large square tins and if I smiled nicely at the assistant I would be given some broken biscuits. Mind you in those days money was often short and my mother would often buy a bag of broken biscuits because they were cheap. The thrill of finding a whole biscuit or part of your favourite one was all part of the fun.

It was a lovely memory of childhood and now I’ve had a taste of how long it took in those days to do the shopping.

Who would have thought only a few weeks ago that we would be transported back to the past. As a child I queued and now nearly officially a senior citizen I am doing it again.

And there was the rationing associated with the wars. We got pretty close to that with people telling us we could only have two of this or three of that and notes on the shelves that there was only five units per person – Even for products where the shelves were empty.
We might not have been given ration cards but we were back to the blooming queues again and the war years might have even been easier as there was no social distancing.

Thankfully now at least when you get through the doors there are things on the shelves but what about the one way systems – who would have thought that you could get told off for going the wrong way down a supermarket aisle and why is it when you have forgotten something it is always at the start and miles back. Never mind up the ladder and down the snakes you’re back at the start.

A couple of weeks into the shortage I was looking at the empty shelves in the bread aisle. No choice just have to have what was there, and on this particular day there was not very much, when a lady in front picked up the last two loaves on the shelve much to the disappointment of an older lady behind her who having given a large sigh was given one of the loaves by the kindly lady – wonder if her next port of call was the fish counter.

But why is it that shortages bring out the worst in people, like the seven “ladies” pushing and shoving each other to get at a delivery of loo rolls that had just arrived and been left on two large pallets on the floor and why would you want five units of 9 pack loo rolls – what are you going to do with 45 loo rolls?

And then there is the kind shop keeper who would put something aside for you. Another journey back to my early teenage years when there was a sugar shortage, which my father blamed on my mother, When she went shopping and saw sugar she would always buy a bag for the store cupboard whether she needed it or not. Then the owner of the corner shop would have saved her a bag, and then the grocers, mum did not like to hurt people’s feelings by refusing their kindness and at the end of the shortage had 56 pounds of sugar in her cupboard, amazingly still hanging on the wall despite the weight.
And the frightening thing is we are beginning to accept all of this as normal but on the upside I have met some really lovely people and had some lovely chats and only the occasional grumpy old git. Maybe an experience of what people were like in the blitz.

All in all it was a wonderful taste of the past even in unfortunate circumstances.

*Alan Simmons*

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**TWO NEW SUFFRAGANS**

At the end of April the two new Suffragans for the diocese of Chichester were named. The Suffragan Bishop of Horsham is to be the Rev'd Ruth Bushyager who is currently Vicar of St. Paul's Dorking. Our own Suffragan Bishop here in East Sussex in the Hastings Archdeaconry will be Prebendary Will Hazlewood, who is Vicar of the United Benefice of Dartmouth and Dittisham in Devon in the diocese of Exeter.

I am delighted with Fr. Will's appointment as he succeeded me as Rector of Iver Heath in Buckinghamshire in the Oxford Diocese. Fr. Will is presently one of the Guardians of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. He is among the 13th successive generation of clergy in his family. We look forward to welcoming Fr. Will to this diocese.
The nation is searching for God in its spiritual home – the Established Church of England. The bereaved in particular are seeking solace in their church at a time of great distress for many. But it’s been made impossible. The Archbishop of Canterbury has acted, I’m sure, in the best interests of supporting the “Stay at Home” policy by closing Anglican churches for regular congregational services.

But why are churches closed to six, seven, eight or so bereaved people for a funeral, often in the most desperate of circumstances? And why does the Church of England’s guidance deny a priest their legal right to enter a church to fly the NHS “thank you” flag in support of doctors and nurses?

Robert Jenrick, the communities secretary, has confirmed to me there is no policy requiring churches be closed for funerals. Indeed, he has gone further and revised the guidance to ensure that funerals can take place in accordance with the wishes of the deceased, provided that social distancing and other safety measures are put in place.

A much-loved parish church, where the deceased might not only have worshipped, but would have been baptised, confirmed and married, is the place where their families rightly want their funeral to take place.

Voting in favour of the Coronavirus Bill, with its sweeping powers, was an awful but mostly necessary duty for me and my fellow MPs. Similarly, the new constraints on our everyday life are awful but mostly necessary. However, these powers were to be used only when necessary, and I believe that Archbishop Welby needs to begin the process of supporting those who are grief-stricken and traumatised as part of the Church’s mission to regain the confidence of the nation.
Before I became a politician, I considered becoming an Anglican priest. I wonder if some leading figures in the Church of England have, in recent weeks, become politicians?

Because when a council justifies banning funerals in a crematorium chapel, as happened recently in Somerset, on the grounds that it is merely following Church of England practice, the Church’s leadership is clear. Such disregard for the grief-stricken needs to stop and the Church of England has the power to do it.

Chris Loader,
(Conservative M P for West Dorset)

This article first appeared in
The Times newspaper on Friday, April 24th 2020

VIRTUAL CONGREGATION

At St Peter's Team Ministry we have really well developed email systems. However GDPR rules mean we can't merge these email lists so we've developed a new system that you're all invited to join. It's called the VIRTUAL CONGREGATION - this will mean we can send emails out to all including St. Peter's, St, Michael’s, TFG, Junior Church, Choir and anyone else who isn't currently on the any list will be able to join.

The existing lists will continue as they are group specific. To join our Virtual Congregation please CLICK the following link.

http://eepurl.com/gW9cFL

Our Facebook group is also a great place to keep in touch and already has daily prayers, links to online services and the odd funny picture from people like Fr David.
ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

At the time of writing I am reading Craig Brown’s new book on the Beatles, having a few years ago enjoyed his rather indiscrete book on Princess Margaret. I was fascinated to discover the following information on page 398.

Paul McCartney once had a discussion with the philosopher Bertrand Russell about the Vietnam war. As a child Russell could remember meeting William Gladstone. Gladstone himself remembered once partaking of breakfast with the elderly poet William Wordsworth. The paternal Grandfather of Bertrand Russell was Prime Minister Lord John Russell who visited the exiled Emperor Napoleon on the island of Elba. So – in three leaps and bounds we get from Paul McCartney to Napoleon Bonaparte. No wonder one of the Beatles greatest hits was “I wanna hold your hand”.

When recording “All you need is love” which was inspired by John Lennon, the man who played the flugelhorn was a certain David Mason, who also played his instrument in the recording of “Penny Lane”. David Mason in a more classical setting played the flugelhorn at the World Premier of Ralph Vaughan Williams Ninth Symphony, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent (Flash Harry) in the presence of the composer just three weeks before RVW died, aged 85. I once remember visiting Vaughn Williams childhood home deep in the beautiful Surrey Hills. For the first ten years of his life RVW knew his great-uncle Charles Darwin, who was a frequent visitor to the embryonic composer’s childhood home. I believe that while he was in Surrey the great naturalist was studying the
behaviour of earth worms. When the young Ralph asked his mother about “On the Origin of Species”, she told her son “The Bible says that God made the world in six days. Great-Uncle Charles thinks it took longer; but we need not worry about it, for it is equally wonderful either way.” So, from John Lennon to Charles Darwin in a mere three handshakes.

ONLY CONNECT

FATHER DAVID

News From Ukraine

I now have UK services and CMS Zoom meetings to participate in every week which compensates for not being able to meet up with many of my friends.

Both the training groups have been put on hold however before that the ‘BASIS FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRY’ course was very popular with about 25 people trying to squeeze into Anya and Oleg’s now bigger flat.

The Genesis groups are continuing for those who have been able to adapt to the technology. The larger one over Zoom and the other over Skype. Please pray for all those who are not getting the previous support so that they will not feel cut off.

Like many of the poorer countries, many people here are really struggling financially as there is no compensation to support individuals or companies to keep things going. Sadly so many small business renting property have already folded. Others with greater capital have just laid off all their employees, or like Ukrainian Airlines, put all their employees on indefinite unpaid leave.

Thank you for your prayers - I aim to get a further update out soon

Greetings and best wishes to everyone at St Peters.

Blessings
Alison
The Great Realisation
from the YouTube video by Probably Tom Foolery

It was a world of waste and wonder, of poverty and plenty,
before we understood why hindsight’s 2020.
You see the people came up with companies to trade across the lands
but they swelled and got much bigger than we ever could have planned.

We’d always had our wants, but now they got so quick
you could have anything you wanted, in a day, and with a click.
We noticed families had stopped talking, that’s not to say they never spoke.
But the meaning must have melted and the work life balance broke.

And the children’s eyes grew squarer, and every toddler had a phone.
They filtered out the imperfections, but amidst the noise they felt alone.
And every day the skies grew thicker ‘till you couldn’t see the stars,
so we flew in planes to find them, while down below we filled our cars.

We’d drive around all day in circles, we’d forgotten how to run.
We’d swapped the grass for tarmac, shrunk the parks ‘till there were none.
We filled the sea with plastic because our waste was never capped,
until each day you went fishing, you’d pull them out already wrapped.

And while we drank, and smoked, and gambled, our leaders taught us why
it’s best not to upset the lobbies, more convenient to die.
But then in 2020 a new virus came our way.
The governments reacted and told us all to hide away.

But while we all were hidden, amidst the fear and all the while,
the people dusted off their instincts. They remembered how to smile.
They started clapping to say thank you, and calling up their mums,
and while the car keys gathered dust they would look forward to their runs.

And with the skies less full of voyagers, the earth began to breath
and the beaches bore new wildlife that scuttled off into the seas.
Some people started dancing, some were singing, some were baking.
We’d grown so used to bad news but some good news was in the making.
So when we found the cure, and were allowed to go outside, we all preferred the world we found to the one we left behind. Old habits became extinct, and they made way for the new. And every simple act of kindness was now given its due.

*But why did it take a virus to bring the people together?*
Well, sometimes you’ve got to get sick, my boy, before you start feeling better. Now lie down and dream of tomorrow and all the things that we can do. And who knows, if you dream hard enough, maybe some of them will come true.

We now call it the Great Realisation, and yes, since then there have been many, But that’s the story of how it started, and why hindsight’s 2020.

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**Future Events at St Peter’s**

- **Film Hotdogs and ice cream**
  @ St Peter’s Community Centre
  Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July 10am

- **Film and Pizza**
  @ St Peter’s Community Centre
  Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October 10 am
Why won’t the timid Bishops let us mourn our dead at Funerals in Church?

I don’t usually subscribe to the Daily Mail, but Miss Margaret Wilson kindly alerted me to an article in the paper by the journalist Stephen Glover with the above headline. (Stephen Glover was bought up in a Shropshire Rectory, so he knows a thing or two about the Church of England. His sister Sarah married Kenneth Stevenson who was Lecturer at Boston Stump when I was curate there in the late 1970s. Kenneth eventually went on to become a very popular and lively Bishop of Portsmouth, unfortunately he died of leukaemia after retiring to Chichester. I always thought he would have made an exceptionally fine, scholarly Bishop of Durham but sadly that was not to be! Stephen and Sarah’s father was the incumbent of Church Stretton - I met their parents once when they visited Boston and to tell you the truth I found them to be a bit intimidating - father was very much of the Old School of English clergymen).

Anyway, Stephen Glover’s article certainly takes the hierarchy of the Established Church to task as he points out that the Government would have no objection to funerals taking place in church if the bereaved observe social distancing. In the past few weeks, I have officiated at graveside funerals and those in Crematoriums. So, what material differences is there between a funeral in a Crematorium Chapel and a funeral in a parish church? Mr. Glover writes “Isn’t ours a strange country which allows DIY stores to open during the lockdown while churches remain barred and closed against the faithful, and people are forbidden to attend proper funerals?”

The two Primates issued an edict stating that church doors should remain firmly closed even for private prayer and clergy are not allowed into their own parish churches to say prayers or to live stream services. So, on Easter Day we had the Archbishop of Canterbury, no less, celebrating Holy Communion on the kitchen table in Lambeth Palace when he had a splendid chapel just down down the stairs. Our own Archdeacon Edward
put his head above the parapet and made valid objections to these severe restrictions - this was followed by the Dean Emeritus of Durham cathedral (also signed by hundreds of clergy) sending a letter to The Times expressing grave concern at the Archbishops’ draconian constraints.

I must admit that every single Sunday since the lockdown I have celebrated Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel on my own but on behalf of everyone. St Peter’s has been at the centre of Bexhill since the year 772 and it was not going to be on my watch the celebration of Holy Communion was to be abandoned!

I write these words in my study in the early hours of May 8th when later today we shall be celebrating the 75th anniversary of V E Day, sadly, with severe restrictions. From 1939 to 1945 Adolph Hitler failed to close our parish churches. In those days George VI called for days of National Prayer which were ably led by William Temple, a great Archbishop of Canterbury. Where Herr Hitler failed Covid 19 has succeeded. I wonder, what kind of message is given out by a church door which remains firmly shut? Alas, at a time of crisis, the Church of England has let down the people of this nation.

Who do you think you are kidding Mr. Covid,
If you think we’re on the run?
We are the boys who will stop your little game.
We are the boys who will make you think again.
‘Cause who do you think you are kidding Mr. Covid,
If you think old England’s done?
Mr. Brown goes off to town on the eight twenty-one,
But he comes home each evening and he’s ready with his gun.
So who do you think you are kidding Mr. Covid,
If you think old England’s done?

EVERY BLESSING
FATHER DAVID
LETTER TO THE TIMES

Dear Sir,

As the Bishops of the Church of England meet to consider their next steps in response to the pandemic, we call on them to change their current policy, which prevents clergy from visiting their churches to pray or broadcast a service. Bishop Peter Selby in The Tablet last week (‘Is Anglicanism going private?’, 30th April 2020), speaks for many laity and clergy about the Church of England’s current approach. We fear, like him, that ‘this may mark a decisive point in the retreat of the Church of England from the public to the private realm’. We regard what has happened to be a failure of the Church’s responsibility to the nation, stifling our prophetic witness and defence of the poor, and ask for open discussion and accountability through the Church’s structures and other forums regarding the processes and thinking which led to these decisions.

It is widely agreed that the temporary closure of churches for public worship is necessary in the current crisis. However, the broadcast of services from a closed church is explicitly permitted by government guidelines, yet unlike almost all other Churches in these isles, the Church of England has gone beyond this advice. Without detracting from the excellent worship offered by many clergy in their homes, domestic settings cannot replace the church buildings whose architecture, symbolism and history represent the consecration of our public life. Moreover, Church of England clergy have also been prevented from ministering in schools educating the children of key workers and to the sick and dying in hospitals.

As the government is talking about the hope of easing the national lockdown could the Church of England now offer similar hope to its people with this first step?

Yours faithfully,

Michael Sandgrove (Dean of Emeritus of Durham)
along with hundreds of other clergy
It’s amazing how a song can transport you someplace else. I can’t hear ‘Africa’ by American soft-rockers Toto without drifting back 35 years to a school disco in Plymouth. Right now I’m sat by a Sussex reedbed listening to two songs simultaneously pouring from deep in the reeds. These songs also take me back to my childhood and Saturday mornings spent birdwatching beside similar reedbeds in South Devon.

These summer singers are two small brown birds; the Reed Warbler and the Sedge Warbler and their songs make me feel strangely nostalgic for a place I have never been; Ghana, where these warblers will have spent the winter before returning to Sussex each spring. Reed Warblers are rather plain whereas Sedge Warblers sport a streaky back and stripy head with a heavy ‘eyebrow’ that fixes them with a permanently intense expression. But these identification features aren’t important because you’ll rarely see these secretive birds. But, boy, will you hear them! Because when they start singing they just can’t stop.

The Reed Warbler’s song is a loud, repetitive stuttering chatter of jumbled phrases that just just doesn’t just doesn’t seem to just just just just doesn’t just doesn’t seem to seem to go anywhere. It sounds like one of those warehouse-sized 1950’s computers churning out data. The Sedge Warbler’s song is similar but much more energetic and erratic with added harsh ‘churrrs’ and whistles giving the overall impression that it urgently needs a straightjacket and heavy medication.

These complex songs have a simple message; ‘Hey ladies, my territory is so rich in insects that I don’t have to spend much time hunting for my food; I can waste my time just singing’. It’s the loudest, longest, craziest
song that will seduce a feathered female. Sedge Warblers raise their family in a no-thrills nest low in vegetation but the Reed Warbler weaves an incredible deep hammock lashed together with spider silk between the stiff stems of the tall reeds. The whole cradle will rock as the reeds bow in the breeze.

In August, after raising their families, their warbler thoughts drift back to Africa where drums echo and wild dogs cry out in the night. The warblers will gorge themselves with aphids and, with a fat belly full of fuel, take off from Sussex and head over Iberia, North Africa and the wide Sahara to Ghana; a 3000 mile journey. I always imagine a Ghanaian naturalist pausing momentarily each autumn to observe these returning visitors. Do his thoughts drift to the Sussex riverside where they spent the summer? When the rains return to Africa in the spring they will summon the insect food that will again power their tiny warbler wings back to England to add to my Sussex summer soundtrack.

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