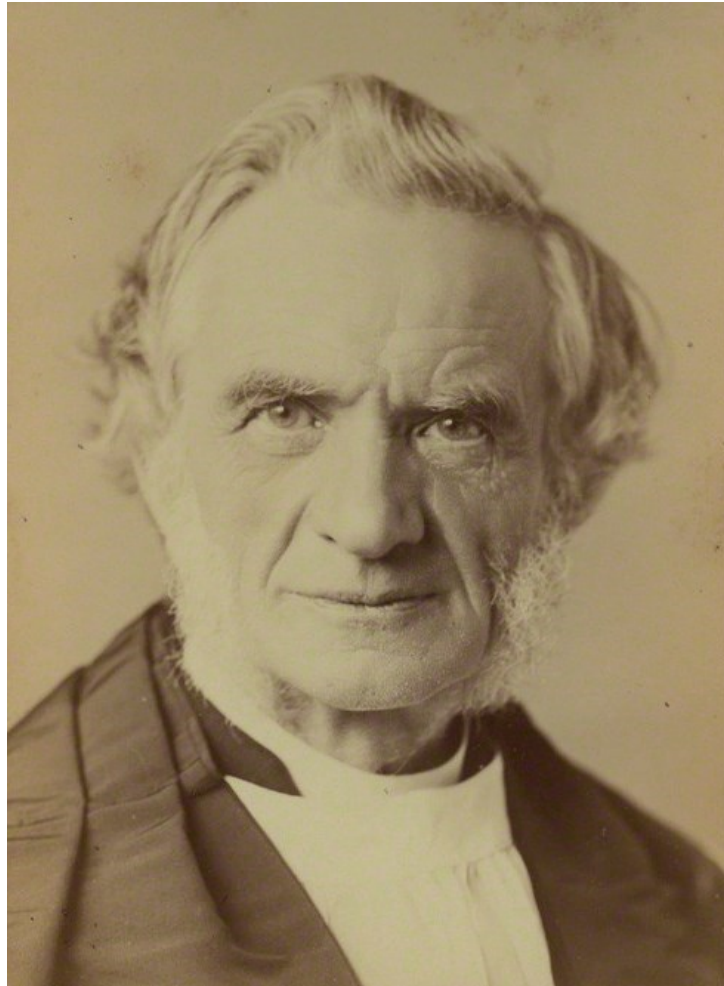


THE PARISH MAGAZINE

August 2020



Brooke Foss Westcott
Bishop, teacher of the faith, 1901

**The United Benefice of
St Michael Lichfield, with St John, Wall**

85p

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Reflection for August...

Almost fifty years ago when I taught at St Clement Danes School, the Inner London Education Authority was debating the issue of racial equality and respect. As part of this process they required schools to reveal the ethnic mix of their sports teams. When requested to provide a breakdown of my cross-country teams, of which there were six, my response to the Head was that I had no idea. Having grown up in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural South London and having been involved in athletics as a sprinter, an event strongly populated by ethnic minority runners, it was not something that I noticed. In relaying my subsequent data to County Hall, the Head did record that, as the youngest member of staff, I did seem oblivious to racial differences. The message back from County Hall was that my inability to notice such differences was, in effect, a form of unconscious racism.

This experience caused me a degree of self-reflection. It certainly did affect my thought processes, although I rejected the notion that my 'modus operandi' in relation to cross-country runners betrayed a lack of awareness – it turned out by the way that the majority of the boys were from ethnic minorities or of foreign extraction [including one Zoroastrian and several boys from the Yugoslav Embassy]! Basically this experience made me realise that one has to be actively conscious throughout one's everyday experiences.

In the mid-1980s when we moved to Lichfield, the consultation about the proposed National Curriculum for History was taking place and, in my capacity as Humanities Inspector, I prepared a letter for the Walsall MBC Director of Education to send to the Department of Education and Science. It clearly argued that History should be a skills-led subject, with its contents embracing such issues as political competence, economic awareness, women's history and black history. The letter was duly dispatched but there was no reply. About four years later, the senior History HMI, at a private Historical Association event, revealed that my letter had been passed around Whitehall for

some considerable time because no one knew how to respond to my proposals relating to women's history and black history – apparently economic awareness and political competence were not so much of an issue! This retrospectively also explained why my nomination by the National Association of History Inspectors as their representative to the National Curriculum History Working Party had been quietly deflected!

You may say where is this going? One of the central issues of our time has become the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign. Some of us have been arguing for many years that the cultural history of what is now labelled the BAME community should be fully respected and valued; and yet it is clear that it has not been taken seriously.

The data from UCL in recent years has revealed the degree to which people in Britain were paid compensation when slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833. It is simply horrifying, with John Gladstone, father of the future Prime Minister, being the largest single beneficiary, and this is exacerbated by the knowledge that the national debt caused by this compensation has only recently been cleared. No one apparently ever thought that people who had previously been denied their freedom in any way warranted compensation.

How could Christian people have been associated with slavery at all? The inherent mood in 1807, when slavery was abolished in Britain, appeared to have been that people's consciences were now clear, even though slavery continued in the British Empire. This was simply shocking and this situation was exacerbated by the fact, in the 1830s, that people expected, and received, compensation for the loss of their wholly unfree workforce.

My instinctive understanding is that Christians of all kinds are drawn by Jesus to a spiritual belief that draws everyone together in faith regardless of any differences at all. We must not allow ourselves to ignore any form of injustice by just not being sufficiently aware. If we

turn to St John's Gospel, at the very beginning we are guided to the reality that our faith comes from God. Later Jesus tells us that God's house will welcome everyone and he emphasises to us that, as He has loved us, we should behave in the same way to everyone else. Our straightforward understanding of Jesus' message will guide us through these challenging debates.

Some of us practise our faith in a secular and academic world. Things have improved. Thirty-five years ago, a request by the two youngest members of the Historical Association council for the Association to close its account with Barclays Bank because of their links with the South African 'apartheid regime' was severely defeated because it was seen as outside their remit. By contrast this week, following his extraordinarily naïve comments on race, the Historical Association swiftly and peremptorily stripped Dr David Starkey of his Medlicott Medal for service to History. Things have improved.

We need to be vigilant and continue to keep in our minds that Americanism – WWJHD – What would Jesus have done? We need to apply what we have learned from the teaching of Jesus to every aspect of our lives.

Trevor James

LARGE COPIES of the magazine are available on request

Deadlines!

For **SEPTEMBER** Magazine: Deadline is
MONDAY 17th August
Contact David Bull

Pew Sheet:
every Thursday 7:30am
Contact Parish Office

Letter from the Rector

On 12th July we began Sunday services in both St Michael's and St John's churches after being away since March. Everything seemed to go well and we have arranged the churches to maximise social distancing and have put in place other measures to ensure the health and safety of everyone who comes. At the moment we cannot sing hymns, but we can have organ music and that lifts the spirit and makes things seem a bit more normal.

But of course, things are not normal and starting up again is much harder than stopping. It requires careful thought and planning not just on the part of those who lead the service but on the part of everyone who comes. We are all now much more aware of those around us and how safe they are feeling. Coming to church again after such a break and in these circumstances is not an easy step to take and there will be some people who will not feel able to come for some weeks. We had good congregations at all our services but there were many notable absences too. Among those are the sad absences of those who have died since we were last together.

It is important that we ensure that everyone is included as much as possible, whether they are at church or at home. For this reason, we will continue to record and post on Youtube the readings and the sermon for each week. That will also be the same sermon that is heard in our two churches. During the pandemic so far, we have been united around the word of God in scripture and in the preaching of the word. This unity has kept us together even when we have been unable to meet. It is important to maintain it in the weeks ahead. So, one of the new things in church will be that the sermon may be projected on a screen to watch and listen to.

In this strange year we have missed some of the main festivals of the Christian faith – at least as far as services in church are concerned. We have not been able to have Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost. I am not sure that there has ever been a time in

our history when churches have been closed and these festivals have not been kept. But they have not gone unnoticed and unmarked entirely. We have had our recorded readings and sermons according to the festival and the season. In addition, starting on Ascension Day we introduced a Sunday evening service on Zoom. It is a platform that many of us have got used to over the last weeks for staying in touch with family and friends and for meetings. It works well for virtual gathered worship too and because it is live there is the added feeling of being with people – even if not in the same building. We have had good congregations for these services and they bring together those who are able to come to church and those who are not. The weekly notice sheet has more details as to how to sign up, but you can also contact Angie on the office for help. We will continue to run these services on the evening of the first and third Sundays of the month.

One of the features of St Michael's church is how much it is used for groups and activities outside our church services – Film Club, First Steps, Tuesday Club, Mothers' Union, School Worship – to name only a few. These activities are our contact with and support for the wider community and are very important to us. Because of the requirements of social distancing and making sure that the pews and other part so the church are clean and safe for Sunday we have no plans to re-start any of these activities at the moment. This is very sad and unfortunate and we will keep the situation under constant review. I think that the reality is that for the rest of 2020 we will not be able to return to the way things were before the lockdown. We may be able to do some things and as the situation develops we will let everyone know.

In the meantime, the feedback has been that coming back to church for worship feels good and safe and its really great to see people “face to face” and not on a screen.

If you feel able to join us you will find a warm welcome at St Michael's or St John's.

Simon Baker, Rector

DIOCESE NEWS

I was glad...

I was glad when they said unto me, 'We will go into the house of the Lord.'

The Psalmist's words have rung poignantly in my ears over the last weeks, as we have been unable to enter our churches to worship together. At the time I am writing, the timetable for our re-entry into church buildings is not yet clear, as it will be dependent on the government's gradual easing of restrictions, which in turn is contingent upon the effectiveness of those restrictions in containing the spread of the coronavirus. We do know, though, that we will have to move through different phases in taking up again the use of our churches, that many precautions will need to be taken to ensure that our churches are safe and clean, and that some limitations (on singing, on numbers, on distancing) will remain in place.

Nevertheless, there will be a time when 'our feet shall stand within the gates' of our churches together, and I look forward to that with eager anticipation. The closure of our buildings has been the right decision to help protect the common good of our society's health, but it has not been easy: we have been missing these places we love, hallowed by the prayers of generations; we have been missing the real fellowship of one another, fellow members of the body of Christ; and we have been missing sharing together in that body and blood in communion. When we meet again we will indeed be glad; and it will be for our churches collectively a time of restoration, a return from exile.

In the Bible, times of exile are of course full of longing for restoration; but they are also times of re-imagination. God's people during their years in Babylon learned so much more about the purposes of their God that they were able to shape their life in a new way when they returned to Jerusalem. And our own, much shorter, exile has been a time of re-imagination for us too. We have learned

new ways of being together in virtual reality; we have found new patterns of worship; we have discovered in a new way what it means to serve our communities. While our buildings have been closed, our churches have been very much alive and learning. And it is vital that we should take that new learning into our restored life together as we re-enter our churches.

Here are a few points of learning, taken from an evangelical website, (<https://fiec.org.uk/resources/what-is-god-teaching-us-through-coronavirus>) which I have found helpful. The writer suggests that in our experience of this lockdown, God has been training us:

- as we are unable to gather physically as churches, to appreciate the vital importance of meeting together;
- as we feel our individual weakness and vulnerability, to repent of our self-dependence;
- as the vulnerable are in self-isolation for a long period, to care for others and put their needs ahead of our own; as we find ourselves restricted in our homes and communities, to gain a renewed evangelistic heart for our neighbours;
- if we find ourselves confined at home with family, to deepen our relationships;
- as we find ourselves unable to do many of the things we have taken for granted, to value what really matters in life; as we find ourselves threatened by something affecting the whole of society, to value good government;
- as we find ourselves with time on our hands, to regain a habit of daily prayer and bible reading;
- as we find ourselves in awe of healthcare workers and those performing essential jobs, to free us from our adulation of over-paid celebrities and sports stars;
- as we feel the fear of death and frailty of life, to appreciate the gospel hope of resurrection with joyful confidence in the future that awaits us;

- as we sense that the lock-down is going to last longer than we first imagined, to value the virtues of patience and long-suffering;
- as we begin to understand the devastating impact that the virus will have in less developed countries, to regain our passion for world mission and to care for our poorer brothers and sisters around the world.

These are things for us to take to heart in our own individual lives and in our local churches. We will also need to shape new ways of planning our mission and ministry at a diocesan and at a national level, and work is already beginning on that. In all that we do, as individuals or as churches, we will need to hold together the twin themes of restoration and re-imagination. So we pray, in the words of the eucharistic prayer for Lent that we were using at the beginning of all this, that through a pilgrimage of prayer and discipline we may grow in grace and learn to be your people once again.

+Michael

Published: 9th July 2020

LICHFIELD FOODBANK

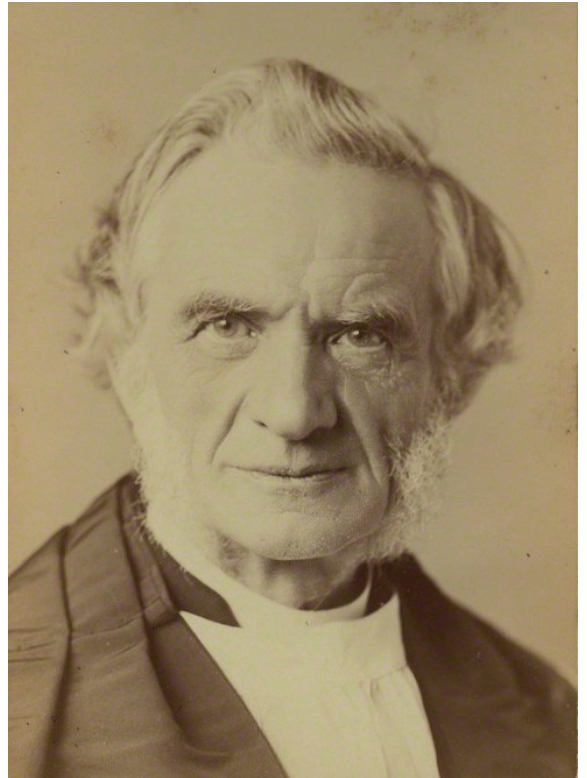
The Foodbank has continued to function throughout lockdown and is dealing with increased numbers of clients. Donations of items can still be made at the collection boxes in our local supermarkets and in church. . If you can, please do support this appeal. Many thanks. *Trevor*



You can access more information about the Foodbank on their website <https://lichfield.foodbank.org.uk/>. There is information for those who would like to make a financial donation and a gift aid form.

Brooke Foss Westcott,

(born Jan. 12, 1825, near Birmingham, Warwickshire, Eng.—died July 27, 1901, Auckland Castle, Durham), Anglican bishop of Durham, Eng., and biblical scholar who collaborated with Fenton J.A. Hort on an influential critical edition of the Greek text of the New Testament.



Westcott took a degree at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1848 and was elected a fellow of the college in 1849. He left Cambridge in 1852 for a post at Harrow, where he earned a distinguished reputation as a lecturer and scholar during a 17-year tenure.

In 1870 Westcott became regius professor of divinity at Cambridge, a position he retained even after being named bishop of Durham in 1890. The Westcott-Hort New Testament appeared in 1881 after nearly 30 years of work and became a major source for the English Revised Version of the Bible published the same year. Westcott also wrote commentaries on the gospel and epistles of St. John, and his *History of the New Testament Canon* (1855) was for many years a standard work in biblical scholarship.

In 1889 Westcott convened a conference of Christians from all over Europe to consider the arms race then afflicting the continent. From this conference emerged the Christian Social Union, with Westcott as its president. His social concerns found other outlets in the promotion of missionary work, which he enthusiastically supported as bishop, and in the mediation of the Durham coal strike of 1892.

PANDEMIC IN PERU

Some years ago, we, at St Michael's, had a visit from Paul Tester (Ruth Bull's nephew) and his wife, Sarah, as they prepared to begin their work in Peru, as Mission Partners with CMS. They live in Lima with their three young daughters and here they share with us a little of life in Peru since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic:



“It’s not the first wave, it’s a tsunami”

“Across the world we are all affected by the Covid-19 ‘storm’” was a phrase shared frequently in the earlier days of the pandemic. But it quickly became apparent that whilst we are all in the same pandemic ‘storm’, around the world people are in the storm in very different ‘boats’. Some countries are well prepared to deal with the effects of the pandemic, have the economic resources to invest in improving health systems and sustaining income for those who can’t work during lockdown. But others have been overwhelmed by the virus, both in terms of numbers of Covid-19 cases and deaths and in the knock-on impacts of lockdowns. Sadly Peru is much more in the second of these situations. The sense has been less of a first wave of the pandemic and more like a Covid-19 tsunami.

As cases spread from Asia, to Europe and then on to the Americas, governments on this side of the Atlantic had some time to prepare. Cases arrived in Peru with travellers wealthy enough to visit Europe and soon spread widely despite a very early and strict lockdown imposed by President Martin Vizcarra. The lockdown meant that for ten weeks people were only allowed out for food, medicines and for healthcare. On Sundays no one was allowed out. After ten weeks adults were allowed out for one hour's exercise and just before that, children were allowed out for half an hour's exercise within 500m of home.

Of course the hardest hit were those who live in extreme poverty. Many people in the country live hand to mouth and don't have the savings to ride out three months without being able to go to work. The government announced a series of measures to help, giving cash allowances to many of the poorest and hardest hit. Sadly this was one of the measures which then accelerated the spread of the virus. Many people here don't have a bank account and so large queues formed at the state banks where people could access the cash. Most in Peru don't have refrigerators and so shopped daily at the markets which became focal points for transmission. The home situation for many is one of large family groups living in cramped conditions and so any contagion quickly spread amongst families.

So despite a strict and crippling lockdown, the virus spread widely. Although official figures for the country currently show just over 11,000 deaths due to Covid-19, a simple observation of the 'excess deaths' for the country show figures several times that, all in a population roughly half that of the UK. The health system has been pushed beyond its capacity and although intensive care bed numbers have been increased, there are still less than 2000 available across the country and medical equipment, including oxygen have been in short supply. In some areas, people have had no access to health care. We are amongst the very fortunate who have been able to continue to have enough to buy food and otherwise stay at home. It has been difficult with the five of us in a small flat and with the children not

going out of the apartment block for almost ten weeks. Schools have been suspended for a whole year since March and the girls have online classes. As restrictions are loosened to enable people to begin to return to work, we are still waiting, after four months, for the family to be allowed to go more than 500m from home. No national or international travel is permitted yet, although later this month it is expected that people will be able to begin to travel between some regions where cases are reducing. Numbers of cases remain high albeit slowly decreasing. But we are still amongst the fortunate ones. In the midst of all that has happened we have been challenged to think about what God's call on us in mission looks like in this context. We have comforted the families who have lost loved ones albeit remotely. We have shared what we have with those who have been left with nothing. We have helped church go online for services and prayer and drawn in a good number of people who didn't attend before the pandemic. In Paul's role he continues to support CMS's people in mission across Latin America as they face similarly difficult situations and seek to serve others. Yet in terms of what is happening across Latin America over these last few months it feels like a drop in the ocean. But we know many others are taking the same small steps, across the region and around the world. Our hope and prayer is that as these small drops come together across the region they might become a huge wave of God's love that responds to the terrible impact of the Covid-19 tsunami.

Paul and Sarah Tester, with Sophia (8), Emily (5) and Annabelle (3) serve with the Church Mission Society in Lima, Peru where Paul leads CMS's mission work in the region. For more information see <https://churchmissionsociety.org/people-in-mission/paul-and-sarah-tester/>

POLITICS AND LOCAL HISTORY

Within the last week there has been some discussion amongst politicians as to whether or not it might be possible to vary the lockdown arrangements from area to area. This caused some discussion at 36 Heritage Court as to how this could be regulated, given that there is something finite about boundaries which, in turn, makes them quite arbitrary.

Historically the boundary between Warwickshire and Staffordshire passed through the centre of Tamworth, with the Castle being in Warwickshire and the Parish Church in Staffordshire. This was fortunately remedied in the past so the centre of Tamworth would not now present a challenge in terms of boundaries for shoppers.

However the historic boundary between Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire at No Man's Heath still remains to give us pause for thought. Within a few strides one can move between the four counties, with the two being defined by the Government as being in the East Midlands and the other two as West Midlands.

The naming of No Man's Heath is because in Saxon England it was just shared grazing land, literally shared by itinerant farmers from these four counties. It was not productive in an arable sense but its vegetation was entirely suitable, in due season, for grazing animals. The 19th Century parish boundaries map even show a detached portion of the Lichfield St Michael-on-Greenhill parish at this location, about eight miles from its church, which revealed its

farmers' share of the acreage at No Man's Heath when boundaries were regularised in medieval times.

Another example of where four counties met was the location known as Four Shires Stone at which Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire met. This was reduced to a three-way meeting in 1931 when the boundary of Worcestershire was modified away from this precise location. If you Google 'Four Shires Stone' you should be able find a photograph of the monument that was erected to celebrate this historic location.

Trevor James

THEOLOGY IN MIDST OF COVID-19

Online International Theology Conference

Last week I gave a paper at an online theology conference, so I thought I'd just share a few insights from the conference with you all.

It was a really fascinating conference with people giving papers and participating from all over the world. Once again, I was thankful for modern technology (and specifically Zoom) in making this possible! Some might say it's too early to be theologising about the Covid-19 pandemic, but one of the conference organisers made the point that it's important to capture what we are all thinking and feeling in the midst of this, and I agree with him.

I gave a paper entitled 'The role of faith in narratives of suffering, loss and trauma after the English Civil Wars'. By offering an historical perspective I tried to offer new insights on how the church might shape its pastoral and theological response to Covid-19, particularly as people move from the time of trauma to forming narratives which help them heal and recover. I received a good response to my paper and lots of questions, which was really helpful.

One element which came up in my paper, and in quite a few others (always interesting to see if common themes come up between people from all over the world) was the need to make space for lament in churches as we begin to think about and share our experiences of Covid-19, whatever they may be (and they will be very varied). Lament is an important part of our liturgy and prayer, and of our scriptures such as in the Psalms, but many argued we need to make more space for it in church, particularly now as society begins to reflect on this crisis. Another common theme which I hope to think about further was the role of virtual online worship during lockdown and how that has shaped church, worship and community – there was much discussion of its strengths and weaknesses. All in all, it was a great experience and I hope to be giving more papers and attending more conferences in the future. I look forward to talking to you more about it when we meet again.

Rev Mel

St.Michael's Churchyard

I am pleased to report on Good News for The Churchyard. It has been almost 6 months since we were last able to meet for our monthly Working Party Sessions. However, it has been great to see the wonderful way in which our Churchyard has been enjoyed by so many in our Community during the lockdown.

I have seen people of all ages walking on their own or with their partners; and it has been encouraging to see families with small children walking or cycling through this beautiful, sacred space. I would like to thank The Reverend Linda for her Churchyard Prayer stations. I am sure these have given lots of comfort to people in what has been a very difficult time.

Nature has of course continued in its own way. There has clearly been an increase in growth with more wild flowers appearing as well as gorgeous displays of daffodils, bluebells, wild garlic, cow parsley and many more plants.

What of the future? We hope to re-start our Working Party Sessions as soon as it is safe to do so. We meet once a month on Saturdays from 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. An immediate task for us will be to cut down our Meadow Plants so the seeds can be scattered around for next year. In the Autumn we will be planting 30 free trees which we will receive from The Woodland Trust. If you would like to join our Working Party please let me know. You will be made very welcome.

I hope you enjoy looking at the photographs printed here, showing views of the Churchyard through the Spring and Early Summer.

Best Wishes to you all.

Ray Allen 01543 251654





Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Diocese of Lichfield

Our response to COVID-19

As well as providing help throughout the UK, Mothers' Union is also working hard right across the world, supporting the most vulnerable during this pandemic

Mothers' Union members around the world have been working tirelessly to reach out to those who are vulnerable at this challenging time. For many of the countries in which we work, lockdown regulations present huge challenges to the livelihood, nutrition and safety of communities. In some countries, people are faced with the impossible dilemma of risking being shot for breaking the lockdown regulations in order to go out to work and earn an income, versus their family suffering from starvation if they do not. Many countries are experiencing huge rises in the number of domestic violence cases due, in part, to the stress this kind of dilemma is causing, combined with being cooped up in what already may be a volatile and overcrowded environment.

Here is a small snapshot of some of the work our Mothers' Union groups around the world have been a part of:

Liberia

Members have identified the vulnerable in their local communities and regularly call them to check their needs and to try to tackle loneliness. From this, prayer networks have been formed. They are packaging educational materials to be distributed to children in the various communities who aren't currently at school to take the strain off parents and to give children some stimulating learning. Some groups are briefing their members and distributing handwashing materials and protective gear.

Myanmar

Members are working with the Gender Equality Network to tackle the rise in gender-based violence (GBV). Many of the members are in remote villages so cannot access SMS and internet, but thankfully because many of the Diocesan Development Coordinators have the internet they have been able to communicate messages regarding what to do if you are facing violence at home and signs to look out for if you suspect your neighbour is. They are also making cotton face masks because surgical masks are very expensive. They are selling these very cheaply or giving them for free to those who cannot afford to buy them. We are currently seeking funding for a larger scale programme to use the highly skilled Parenting and MULOA facilitators to train others in the community on tackling COVID-19 related cases.

West Indies

Mothers' Union usually has a meals on wheels service but that has currently stopped due to social distancing regulations, so instead members are packaging food and each person involved has committed to supporting one family each who they have identified as vulnerable. They have also found great comfort in encouraging each other in prayer and fellowship over WhatsApp.

Uganda

Members are supporting those who are living 'hand-to-mouth' with food and care packages in order to relieve the strain of not earning an income. They are also sharing important information and advice about protecting against the virus via social media, particularly trying to dispel myths and fight stigma.

Like many countries, GBV cases are also on the rise in Uganda so members are seeking funds to tackle this through TV and radio messaging and offering conflict resolution sessions to families using professional counsellors.

South Africa

Mothers' Union is using social media and WhatsApp to share educational messages about effective handwashing, how COVID-19 is spread and how to protect yourself. They are also developing a support network of qualified counsellors to be available to those affected by increased violence and tension within their households and communities.

Burundi

Members have been proactive in communicating accurate messaging to their communities through their 900+ literacy and savings group facilitators. They are also looking to support the most vulnerable families with the provision of soap and ensure that the message of social distancing is being understood to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the rural communities.

South Sudan

Members are particularly focusing on getting accurate COVID-19 information in different languages to the camps surrounding Juba. Social distancing is more of a challenge because of the overcrowded living conditions in these camps, so the importance of good handwashing is therefore an essential message to get across.

Democratic Republic of Congo

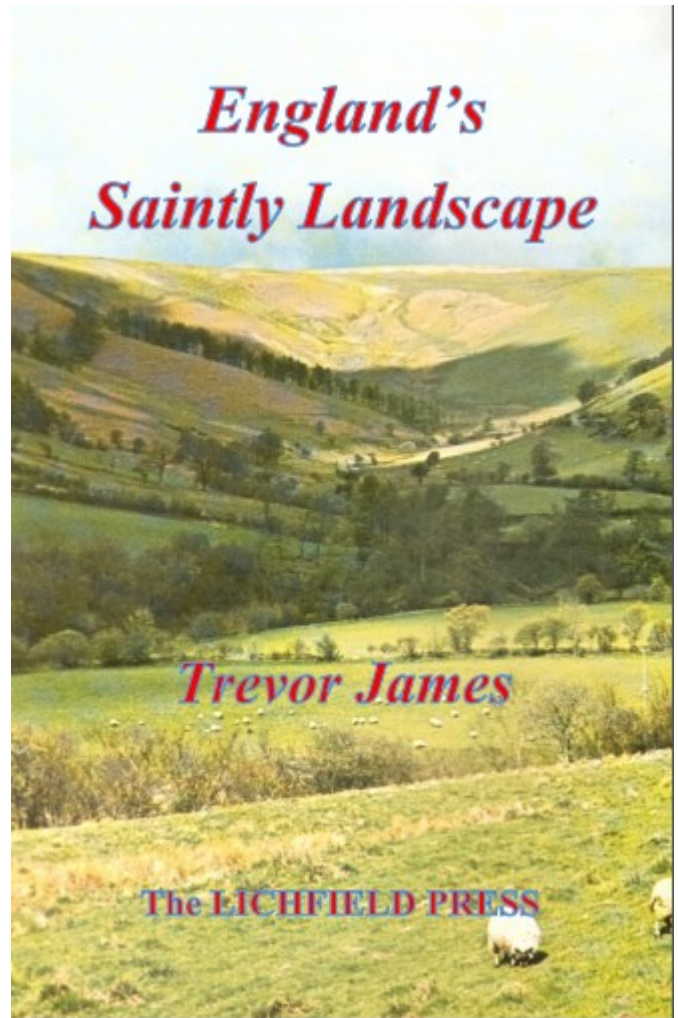
Mothers' Union is working through members and clergy to get messages to their communities about handwashing, how to make masks and the importance of social distancing. They also plan to have a media campaign raising awareness of the increased risk of violence in overcrowded areas of Kinshasa, which may be under additional strain because of lockdown and not being able to work and feed their families.

(article taken from the Summer edition of Families First)

ENGLAND'S SAINTLY LANDSCAPE

Trevor James, after forty years gathering, examining and assessing evidence, of the influence of the early Christian saints on the English landscape, has drawn his conclusions together so that others may share his wider interpretation.

To this end he has recently published his book "England's Saintly Landscape" and has made 20 copies of his book available to St Michael's for sale, at a cost of £10, the proceeds from which will go into Church funds.



I have read the book and found it to be a most informative and interesting commentary on how England's local population's and trades' reverence of the early saints influenced the geography of early Anglo-Saxon England, which persists well into our present day, by the adoption of saints as patrons by various trades and professions and/or proximity to Pilgrimage routes along which many religious communities were established to provide succour to pilgrims on their long and arduous journeys.

Should you be interested in purchasing a copy of Trevor's excellent book please 'phone Lyn Shiel (01543/320437) for details.

David Shiel

The following article was left in the vestry a couple of weeks ago. It is by the former Rector of this benefice, the Revd David Beedon. It certainly gives us a different perspective. *Simon Baker 5/7/20*

PRISON IN A PANDEMIC IS WORSE

Restrictions on movement are not the same as incarceration, says David Kirk Beedon

Since the Prime Minister's announcement on 23 March, telling people to stay mostly indoors, the word 'lockdown' has become part and parcel of common parlance.

In the debate leading up to the announcement, concerns were raised about infringements of civil liberties. Subsequently, some on social media have likened the Covid-19 restrictions to being in prison.

It is not; and it is disturbing that anyone should feel that the nuisance of social distancing, limited shopping, and restricted movement is akin to mass incarceration. Having worked in prisons for many years, and having witnessed the levels of deprivation and despair that can reside within their walls, staying at home and washing my hands while singing 'Happy Birthday' are trivial inconveniences in comparison.

In England and Wales, there are a little more than 83,000 people held in Her Majesty's prisons. Speaking

on Radio 4's *Today* programme last month, the president of the Prison Governor's Association, Andrea Albutt, described prisons as fertile breeding grounds for Covid-19. I know staff to be working heroically to maintain decent but safe and secure conditions behind the razor wire, and doing so at some risk to their own health (although they are rarely acknowledged as 'frontline' in public praise).

In a prison in which I served, I introduced a prayer-request board, on which those who came to chapel could pin concerns that weighed on their hearts. I would work through their requests systematically at morning prayer. I was frequently humbled and moved by the sorrow that these predominately young men had known already in their lives. These were life-wounded souls. None of this is to excuse or condone the crimes that they had committed, but it is to recognise their humanity, which can easily be lost in the criminal-justice system.

While it is sometimes observed that 'crime is a young-man's game' (as desistance – abstaining from crime – is known to increase with age), recent reports (before Covid-19) had started to highlight health-care challenges that were arising because of a growing elderly element in the prison population (partly to do with an increase in historical sexual-abuse convictions). Because of their age and concomitant health issues, many are extremely vulnerable to the coronavirus.

Given the high incidence of adverse childhood experiences among the prison population, it is unsurprising that levels of mental illness are high. In a survey carried out by the Prison Reform trust, 26 per

cent of women and 16 per cent of men in custody stated that they had been treated for mental-health issues in the year before being arrested. Similar levels of psychosis are reported (in the general population it is four per cent). A person in custody is 8.6 times more likely to take his or her own life than someone who is at liberty.

I have recently submitted to the University of Birmingham some prison-based research into pastoral care for indeterminately sentenced people in custody. In my interview analysis, I noted that some of the participants displayed high levels of anxiety and morbidity. Experiences in their formative years had left them deeply pessimistic about their life outcomes and those of their loved ones.

'LOCKDOWN' is a word that is familiar to anyone who has worked in a prison. It is usually a state that a prison or wing goes into if there is unrest or a security issue to be investigated. Residents can end up being confined to their cells for 23 hours a day: a shower is their only respite.

This is the state of affairs that prisons are currently working hard to avoid having to implement. The Government's proposed plans to release (on licence) thousands of low risk people in custody who have only a short time left to serve stalled, after it was discovered that a few were released by mistake.

The prison estate across England and Wales was strained before Covid-19; but if staff sickness levels and prison healthcare demands increase as rapidly as is predicted, it is hard not to be concerned about the

possibility of widespread unrest. Presently, in most prisons, morale is reported as remaining high and relationships are healthy among staff and prisoners. Family visits have now been suspended; so, for the anxious, they are 'banged up', fearing for their loved ones, and with only four walls to stare at, or doom-laden cyclical news reports to watch. Great work is being done by chaplains, mental-health staff, officers and others. But there is limited scope for the human interaction that is so important for us all, but especially so for the life-wounded souls who are often encountered behind bars. In this season of Eastertide, when we celebrate a hope that transcends the fear of death or disease, I commend those souls to your prayers. I trust that knowledge of their plight makes the coming weeks feel less onerous for those of us still more fortunate, and the reasons for gratitude easier to find. This is definitely not like being in prison.

The Revd David Kirk Beedon was a prison chaplain from 2012 to 2018, and formerly a parish priest. He has recently submitted his doctoral thesis "Hope Deferred, Humanity Diminished? An ethnographic enquiry into pastoral care for those serving a sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection" to the University of Birmingham.

Camas Notes *by Ted Green*

We called off the main Camas August 2020 trip early this year so as not to incur expenses we might not be able to get back. However, we hoped to send up a small party by minibus, led by Jenny Bryant, until Camas had to close for the year on the advice of the Scottish government. We've already booked for August 2021 and hope to have our full range of fundraisers, including the Strawberry Tea in my garden again.

David Bull has asked me to write something from the past about Camas for this magazine and it's meant that I've had a wonderful morning going through the newsletters, bringing back memories from so many happy weeks on Mull and Iona. By far the best Camas newsletter was in 2011 when I didn't edit it. Jon Anketell did a fantastic job on layout and content, but I've never managed to talk anyone else into taking on the job. Last year I did the editing even though I hadn't attended and reading all the contributions and seeing the photos did bring a tear to my eye. I'm going to try and make the 2021 visit as a hanger-on, with Joe Sneddon leading again and a group of Young Leaders (YL) as usual.

From all the contributions over the years I've decided to feature an article by David Baker in 2012, when he and Matt Dyson were the YL, as it sums up the charm that has us going back to Camas year after year. Every Camas is different because of the people and the themes that develop. That year the older ones had been having a good natured argument about whether those studying arts subjects were better than scientists and mathematicians, because the latter couldn't write decent English. I asked David to write about being a YL after so many visits as a group member. As you'll see shortly he quashed any suggestion that mathematicians can't write well. But first, his mention of Charlotte Bull reminded me of an earlier contribution by her.

In 2009 she wrote a short piece on her top moments of that year. It included “Ted giving make-up tips” to which I’d added “(Ed: Don’t ask!)”. All concerned are now responsible adults and it’s time to tell the true story. The younger girls had decided to bring lots of make-up (Yes, to the middle of nowhere) and one of them turned up at breakfast one morning looking a bit like a panda with masses of black eye make-up. She asked me what I thought and, ever the diplomat (!), I replied “Caroline doesn’t wear much make-up so I’m not really qualified to say.” I was very pleased with myself until I came to edit the newsletter and saw what Charlotte thought of my diplomacy. And now to hear from David



A Leader’s Perspective *by David Baker*

From the rolling waves to glorious sunsets, fireside singsongs to climbing sheer rock faces, Camas undoubtedly unifies the raw beauty of nature with an enjoyable, fun and fulfilling week for a large group of hyper-active teenagers; so much so that this was my seventh visit to its wonderful location.

Sunset over Market Bay

For the first time, however, I was in charge. But did being shouldered with the responsibility of getting our group of 22 to a remote site on the Scottish island of Mull dampen my sense of adventure and anticipation of a great week? Did forcing the younger ones to respect a much needed bedtime and calming down prospective students awaiting exam results suffocate my own enjoyment? Did the lack of Marmite quell my excitement of being back at Camas? I can safely say that no it did not to all of the above (though the lack of Marmite was a shame).



David washing poo buckets in 2005

In many ways Camas has changed considerably over the time I've been going, ever since I was a wee laddie of twelve, back in 2005. Long gone are the poo buckets and single shower of the week on Iona of those days. More recent developments see the addition of a new climbing activity to the schedule and even more enjoyably a wonderful night spent wild camping on the nearby Market Bay (supplemented by this week's marvellous weather, windy and generally clear, leading to an ample supply of hot water and a pleasant dearth of midges).

But in many ways it remains the same. The bay itself, with its tidal islands and beautiful view hasn't changed. The buildings in which we spend much of our time – sleeping, eating, singing and playing, alongside more reflective times - are as I remember from my first visit, albeit with the rooms moved around. More importantly the loving sense of community and relationships fostered by the Camas staff (this time reinforced by St Michael's veteran Charlotte Bull) remains as steadfast, strong and welcoming as ever.

As I gazed across the bay, perched on familiar rocks on the penultimate day of our visit, I reflected on some of the moments I've enjoyed from the seven glorious weeks I've spent at Camas – honestly some of the best of my life. Yet even as I get older, and the years merge into one in my memory, I know that the rocks of Camas Bay will still remain a most fantastic place of wonder and peace.

Camas Bay



WALL NEWS

Ramblings after lockdown...

I last wrote at the beginning of lockdown about the journey which we were all experiencing and the new paths and unexpected bends ahead of us. Time has passed and we are now approaching the end of lockdown (if we behave ourselves!) and a new 'normal'! I wonder what your journey so far has been like? I have experienced 2 separate stages for my lockdown. During the first I was home alone. I can remember that I thought then that this should be an opportunity and indeed in many ways it was. I didn't have to go anywhere, get stressed about meeting deadlines, getting to meetings on time or driving anywhere. I had time to do more work in the garden, enjoy jigsaws, read, keep in touch with others by phone and learn how to use Zoom. I enjoyed quiet walks in the Park in spring time with the sun shining through the trees and a succession of spring flowers, the songs of the birds and even the sounds of sheep bleating which are usually overshadowed by the noise of the traffic. For many people these weeks have been very lonely as they have been unable to leave their homes due to the restrictions and we must not underestimate the toll this has taken both physically and mentally. There are many counselling organisations which are preparing to help those in need.

During the second stage of lockdown I experienced what it is like to be locked down with all the family! Major building work was being done on their home which made it uninhabitable, so they all moved in with me! If all had gone according to plan, they would have been out of work or at school all day... This was not to be and it felt as if bodies were busy in every room. On one occasion the cat (of whom I am actually very fond!) walked right across the keyboard of my laptop when I was on video at a Zoom meeting... There have been great advantages... I have only cooked once a week for example, and we have had many laughs together. We are so fortunate here in Lichfield. I

have often thought what it must be like to be shut up with a family of young children in a high rise flat.

So what will happen when lockdown ends? What have you learnt from these past weeks? How do you see the future for you? Will we be able to learn from our experiences and go forth into the future with a new determination to do things differently? Lent was a period in the Christian life when we took stock of our lives and prepared for Easter with its message of resurrection and new life. The lockdown also gives us an opportunity to take stock of our lives, to see what is really important, to have the courage to make changes both for us personally and perhaps for our worship as well. As we walk into the future may we place it in the hands of God and pray that we may move forward along the path which He has for us and trusting in Him for guidance and for that 'peace of God which passes understanding.'

Christine Higgs

COVID– 19

Strange times we are living in.

On Sunday 12th July 2020 we had our first Sunday service since the shut down in March. It had taken some preparation to meet the guide lines set down for worship. The church has been opened up for prayer on Wednesdays and Sundays for some weeks now and looking at the visitors book it has been appreciated by a number of visitors. Linda Rubish has kindly taken on the job of opening up the church on these days.

Rev. Ruth Bull conducted the service and guided us skilfully through the changes. With Paul Wright playing the organ, the music provided connection to our worship. With no singing of hymns I thought that the service would have an empty feel about it, however the intermittent music played gave a sense of continuity. The

congregation are very new to this change of worship but did however join together in adapting to change. The seating arrangements appeared to give the most laughter as social distancing in our small church required some understanding. With one couple married and able to sit together and another mother and daughter together it was just not a matter of sitting in the usual pews. Last in gets to sit at the front social distancing from the Vicar in front ! Not being able to have fellowship in church will no doubt be an issue as post service gives an opportunity for catch up. Outside is alright but what happens when it rains and those clearing up after the service like me miss out on that chatter?

The church has not stayed silent in lock down. On our Patronal service the Rector gave the sermon from St John's. Therefore Ron Plimmer came to film in church to give connection to the surroundings. The grave yard has been keep tidy by John Sutton who cuts the grass. Michael Toplis has also helped in keeping the church yard tidy doing the work of hedge cutting and difficult areas requiring special equipment. Conrad Rubisch continues to wind the clock, Gina has been busy cleaning, Joy has now returned to attend to the flower borders. The Church Wardens have continued to be at hand answering the varied on going running of our the church. Angie has always been on hand working from home giving us continuity in so many ways. Our Ministry team have been providing us with services on line to engage with as we please. This form of communication has, I understand, proved to be used by many. The church is still very much alive with activity. We have learnt to adapt.

Hilary

Bible Readings

Sunday 2nd August
8th Sunday after Trinity
[Green]

Romans 9.1-5
Matthew 14.13-21

Sunday 9th August
9th Sunday after Trinity
[Green]

Romans 10.5-15
Matthew 14.22-33

Sunday 16th August
10th Sunday after Trinity
[Green]

Romans 11.1-2a, 29-32
Matthew 15.[10-20] 21-28

Sunday 23rd August
11th Sunday after Trinity
[Green]

Romans 12.1-8
Matthew 16.13-20

EVENING READINGS

2 Kings 6.8-23
Acts 17.15-end

Sunday 30th August
12th Sunday after Trinity
[Green]

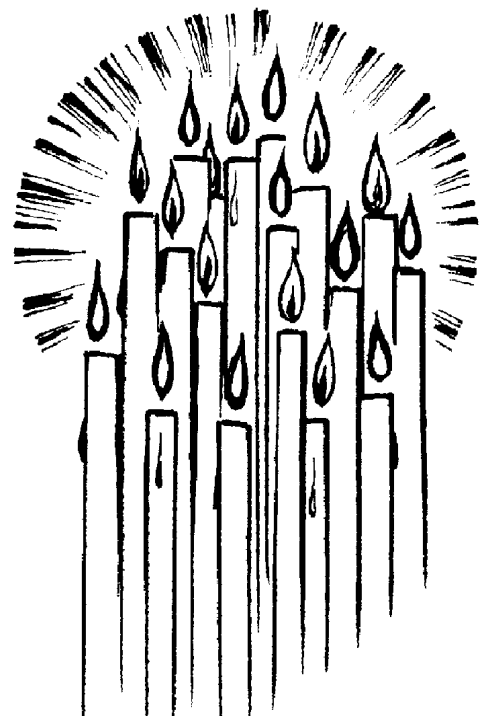
Romans 12.9-end
Matthew 16.21-end

Sunday 6th September
13th Sunday after Trinity
[Green]

Romans 13.8-end
Matthew 18.15-20

Sunday 13th September
14th Sunday after Trinity
[Green]

Romans 14.1-12
Matthew 18.21-35



From the Registers

Funerals

| | | | |
|------------|------------|-------------------|----|
| 30/03/2020 | St Michael | Jean King | 79 |
| 14/04/20 | St Michael | Edwin Brookhouse | 80 |
| 21/04/20 | St Michael | Paul Clarke | 66 |
| 28/04/20 | St Michael | Patricia Robinson | 73 |
| 06/05/20 | St Michael | George Tuckley | 87 |
| 12/05/20 | St Michael | Evelyn Woodward | 89 |
| 14/05/20 | St Michael | Caroline Green | 80 |
| 15/05/20 | St Michael | Joan Weilds | 87 |
| 04/06/20 | St Michael | Ivy Colley | 93 |
| 10/06/20 | St John | Lawrence Clark | 77 |
| 16/06/20 | St Michael | Joan Reid | 64 |
| 08/07/20 | St Michael | Rosemary Hunt | 87 |

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