

# Virtual Church News

Sunday 19 July

Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Welcome to Virtual Church News for the sixth Sunday after Trinity.

Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 356993 or email [stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com)

## A Reading for the Week

Genesis 28.10-17

### *Jacob's Dream at Bethel*

*Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place - and I did not know it!' And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'*



*If you have any photos of Kempston or Biddenham, send them to [stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com)*

## Message from Rev Eric Lomax

It was a drizzly day and I walked Meg, my chocolate Labrador, along the river at Bromham Mill. She was content to occupy herself sniffing every blade of grass and a thick, heavy cloud hung over my head.

I guess the weight of this catastrophe hung over my head like it does, from time to time, over everybody's head. Rather than the personal impact it was more to do with the big question of how we, as a group of churches, untangle ourselves from this.

There are of course the issues of cleaning churches, social distancing, church finances etc. I do not believe that these are insurmountable in any way. More importantly, however, is the question of faith; when all that one feels has been achieved seems to evaporate and people seem, superficially, to be moving away from God. How could we ever rebuild the work that has been started, after all of this?

*Continued on next page...*

## Join us for Online Services

Zoom services are held at 11am on a Sunday and 6pm on a Wednesday. Login details are sent out in the covering email to members of our church community. If anyone else would like these, please do get in touch. Everyone is welcome!

The Love of Christ is not locked down

Virtual  
Virtch  
Church

St James, Biddenham, All Saints, Kempston

## Message from Rev Eric Lomax continued...

It was so silent and peaceful by the river. Throughout the crisis I had become used to the sound of birdsong or the gentle tapping sound that rain made on leaves. Here, there is the sound of a cuckoo and a particularly vocal wood pigeon. Prior to this there were countless emails, but the Lord had not been in the emails and meetings and the Lord had not been in the inconsequential discussions about church bins and dog mess. Great ideas that had been turned around in ever spiraling circles of debate but the Lord had not been in these discussions. Finally all had stopped short and in the absence of activity there was the space to hear the still small voice (1 Kings 19) that transcended all.



A woman passed me and we had a conversation. Turns out she was a therapist called Miriam (such a wonderfully biblical name!). In a conversation I explained to her the questions and the dilemmas that I faced. She was still and listened. Her wisdom was silent and tangible even without a single email exchange. Then she said, 'I can see you have decided what you need to do!'. There was no need for her to say anything else. The silence is a gift of the divine whereas we have always thought that the voice solves everything.

I went on my way with a sense of realisation. There is no need for us to fear what lies ahead because the Lord has promised once and the promise is the only promise he ever needed to make. It is the same promise he made to Abraham and the prophets. The word is Covenant and that is not anything that we can be involved in with the noise and chaos of our social and economic rituals. Covenant is a one-way promise, and once spoken by the Lord, it will not return unfilled (Isaiah 55:11).

So Jacob, in our reading today, after a long journey lies down in the silence of the wilderness and places his head on a stone to sleep and in his dream he sees a ladder that reminded him that in that spot there was a connection between heaven and earth, between the Spirit and the flesh, between the creator and the created, between the Lord of the universe and our own beating heart.

It was then that Jacob was addressed by the same, still small voice that had been and will always be the promise to all generations on the earth; 'I am the Lord, I will give this land to your offspring, who will be like the dust of the earth and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. (*paraphrased*)'

I look forward to voices and music, to coffee and laughter, to warm hands and hugs, but I will miss the silence and sound of bird song. Never let that disappear from your lives again because then you will miss the still small voice that echoes through time and space. Whatever your anxiety or your concerns, God's eternal promise to you speaks clearly through the falling rain and the gentle breeze; 'Do not be afraid, because I am with you, and will never abandon you. For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'. (Jeremiah 29:11). The Lord Has spoken. Amen

God bless

Eric

## Alpha Online Starting 27 July!

Do you want to find out more about the Christian faith? Do you want to be able to ask questions in a safe environment where all views are listened to and nobody is judged?



Then join our new Alpha Online Course which will be starting on Monday 27 July at 7.30pm. For further details contact Jacqui on 356993 or at [stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com)

## Hymns and Devotional Music

Tim Grant-Jones, organist at All Saints, and his wife Irene are live streaming hymns and other devotional music at 10am each Sunday (before the Zoom service). Find this and other music on Facebook by searching for Grant-Jones Musical Services or entering #gjmusicalservices. You can also request hymns in advance!



## Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following on Sunday:

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship. A Word for All Seasons. Celebrating the Catholic Church's Year of the Word and the importance of scripture.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Rev Kate Bottley visits Eyam in Derbyshire which went into lockdown 355 years ago.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Chichester Cathedral.

Wednesday 22 July:

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from St Alban's Church, Holborn, London.

## Follow us on Social Media?

All Saints Church can be found on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintschurchkempston/>

St James's Church can be found on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Jamess-Church-Biddenham-428040160888713/>

<https://twitter.com/BiddenhamChurch>

<https://www.instagram.com/stjameschurchbiddenham/>

Do follow us for more up to date information/daily prayers etc.

## Online Services

The Church of England's online services continue to be broadcast each week on its website and Facebook page at 9am each Sunday.

You can also download the order of service and the sermon in pdf format from the Church of England website.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

Many other churches and cathedrals across the country are also providing online services including St Albans Cathedral. Follow their Youtube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/stalbanscathedral>

## Discovery Group

Meets via Zoom on Thursday evenings 8pm. Contact [john.c.lambert@gmail.com](mailto:john.c.lambert@gmail.com) for details.

**\*Highly Recommended by Members of our Congregation\***

## Daily Hope

The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a free national phone line as a simple new way to bring worship and prayer into people's homes while church buildings are closed because of the coronavirus. Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.



The line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

## For the Children (& young at heart!)

Today's Gospel story is from Matthew 13.24-30 and 36-43 and it is another seed-related parable about the kingdom of God. This one tells us that just like the good wheat and the bad weeds, everyone good and bad should learn to live together. Although there may be things or people in our lives that make us stumble, we should trust in God to 'bring about a full and healthy harvest'.

### Activity:

Colour the ends of three identical sticks with red, yellow and green. Then put them colour end down into a small pot of soil or sand or something similar. You can then play a game with them. Everyone starts at one end of the room/garden. Each person in turn picks out a stick. If they get the green one they move forward one step. If yellow they stay where they are. If red they take a step back (if possible). They then place the stick back in the pot and it is passed on to the next player who takes their turn. The winner is the first person to reach the other side of the room/garden. This game reminds us that, just like the weeds, the sticks may look identical from the surface, but are actually very different.

### Song:

God can do anything [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nuzbWEiaeY&list=PLGOIQUX191CahA0rWCCy2VUzKv\\_rrFG\\_w&index=7&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nuzbWEiaeY&list=PLGOIQUX191CahA0rWCCy2VUzKv_rrFG_w&index=7&t=0s)

### Prayer:

Holy Spirit, as we go out into this imperfect world, go with us, and help us to grow as wheat in good soil. Amen.



## Please pray with me

Dear God and Father,  
as we return to the frenetic chaos of human activity,  
let us not forget the stillness that we have experienced,  
alone and with our families.  
Help us to listen to the silence,  
and know your peace.  
Through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**



## For your prayers

Please pray for:

- Our foodbanks and homelessness charities who are facing a huge increase in demand.
- Countries where Covid-19 is still on the rise.

Our prayer group meets at 8pm on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Get in touch if you would like the login details or have any prayer requests.

Dear Lord, at this time of pandemic, let us foster respect and solidarity with others, especially those who are weak or poor. Let us remain calm and ignore unsubstantiated rumours. Let us take advantage of living together as a family. Let us attend to moments of prayer. Let us cultivate responsibility, patience and hope. **Amen.**

*Prayer from Bishop of La Verapaz, Guatemala, adapted by CAFOD*

## Hymns/Songs of the Week

Lord of all hopefulness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BP1ecUkOTB8>

Beneath the cross of Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbaHBmxckC8>

God be in my head

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArHx42Y27dM>

Heal our land

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyzbpBR1K0I>

## Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

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Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

\* Note: new landline number from June 2020

## Bedford Foodbank

Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever.



Donations of food can be placed in a box in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets. In Biddenham, Imogen Sanctuary is collecting donations from various roads once a month. Email sarah.sanctuary@yahoo.com for further details.

Items currently needed include Cup-a-Soup, Jellies (pre-made), Tinned Rice Pudding, Toothbrushes, Toothpaste, Hand Soap, Anti-Bac Spray Cleaners, Washing Up Liquid, Deodorant, Shampoo, Shower Gel

Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. More information can be found at <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>

## Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

### Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email [help@biddenham.org.uk](mailto:help@biddenham.org.uk) with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email [help@biddenham.org.uk](mailto:help@biddenham.org.uk)

### Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695