

Virtual Church News

Sunday 30 August

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Welcome to Virtual Church News. 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

A Reading for the Week

Romans 12.1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching, the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Virtch

Zoom services continue to be 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!

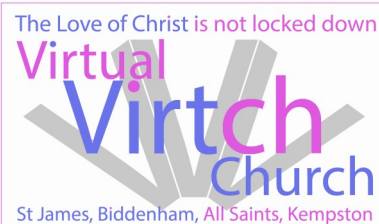


Photo by Rev Eric Lomax.

If you have any photos of Kempston or Biddenham, send them to stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

Service at All Saints on Sunday 30th

Sunday services in our churches (or churchyards if good weather) in the coming weeks will be at 9.30am as follows:

Sundays 30 Aug, 13, 27 Sept - All Saints
Sundays 6, 20 Sept - St James

Please read the following notes on what to expect when attending All Saints Church

Face coverings must be worn by all those who attend unless we are outside (this is now a legal requirement) (if you are exempt please bring some evidence with you). We will have some disposable face masks for use by anyone who has been unable to obtain one.

Please wash your hands before leaving home. You will be asked to sanitise your hands on entering and leaving the church.

A one-way system will operate in both the Church and the Churchyard. Please enter the churchyard via the Main Gate. Entry to the church is by the main door. Please note the signs in place and follow the Sidesperson's instructions. Exit is via the Tower door behind the organ and the side gate in the churchyard. Please adhere to social distancing requirements at all times.

We are required to keep a register of attendees' names and contact numbers which can be used for the Track and Trace system if required. These details will be stored securely and disposed of after 21 days.

If you are in a vulnerable category we advise you not to attend these physical services, but this is ultimately your decision to make.

Please do not attend if you feel unwell.

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Before I came to Bedfordshire, I was the vicar (priest-in-charge) of seven churches in Lincolnshire, the Colsterworth group. Colsterworth was the largest of the communities, and the beautiful medieval church building was the childhood Church of Sir Isaac Newton. He was Baptised in the font there, and his name was recorded on the last page of a very old baptism register. A few hundred yards down the road was his childhood home, Woolsthorpe Manor, and in the orchard at the rear is a very fragile and misshapen apple tree which is supposedly the tree that gave him inspiration for his 'Philosophie Naturalis Principia Mathematica,' which provided us with an outline of our present understanding of the natural laws of the universe (with a few significant tweaks along the way!).

Although Newton was a genius, and a very religious genius at that, to say that he suffered from OCD is an understatement at the very least. After he had made such a remarkable contribution to science Newton was, in 1699, given the role of managing the Royal Mint in London. Obsessively he looked for ways of preventing the forgery and abuse of coinage. It was his idea to put a ridged edge on coins to prevent people from clipping the edges and melting down the silver, as well as being involved in pursuing forgers, and in many cases, overseeing their punishment.

There is another natural law of the universe that Newton does not refer to, which Paul places at the centre of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. When Paul talked, in last week's reading about presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice (12:1), he was referring to the central principle of love which underpins what should be the underlying attitude of the church of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' death on the cross, was on all levels, God showing his love for us in that while we were still messed up, he sent his son to die for us (Romans 5:8). As that love is poured out for us, and into us, so it will overflow to those around us.

In Romans 12:9, Paul describes this as a genuine love. In the same way that Newton wanted to preserve the integrity of coinage, Paul wanted to preserve the integrity of this universal principle of love, an authentic love and not a counterfeit love.

We are as familiar with fake love as we are with fake news in our culture. The fluffy love with little red hearts, blown up as hen-party balloons, and painted on valentines greeting cards, has little to do with the love that the Bible talks about. These things, of course, have their place, and indeed a power of their own as romantic reminders, like a gentle surf brushing over the pebbles, but they do not show the height nor depth nor the power that is demonstrated in the deep ocean of God's love (Ephesians 3).

Genuine love does not turn a blind eye to cruelty, exploitation and injustice, but rather confronts evil for what it is. Real love is not the love that speaks no evil, but rather real love hates that which is evil (Romans 12:9) and dares to confront it.

It welcomes the stranger (verse 13), confronts violence and anger with peace (verse 14), meets sorrow head on with compassion (verse 15), and engages with humility, wisdom and empathy (verse 16). In no way does love reinforce evil with violence, but rather demonstrates its own power in compassion and self sacrifice (verse 17).

Power, authority, violence, control and manipulation are part of the perceived wisdom of human culture, but we are called to the renewal of our minds and intellects, to see things in a different way. We should not be conformed to those perceptions of our culture, but rather, transformed by allowing the God of authentic love to renew of your mind (Romans 12:2).

God Bless

Eric

Greenbelt Festival

29-30 August

Each year a group of people from our Churches head off to Greenbelt over the Bank Holiday weekend. Have you ever wondered what it is like, but not wanted to brave the camp site? Well this year the Greenbelt Festival is going online so you can try out the Festival from the comfort of your own home!

For £10 you can get access to livestream all the content at any time during the whole of September. The line up includes music, spoken word, comedy, ideas and conversations, films, social meet ups and the Great Big Festival Picnic.

For more information and to purchase your 'Virtual Wristband' for the festival weekend, go to <https://www.greenbelt.org.uk/wild-at-home/>



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. Wild at Home, from online Greenbelt Festival.
- 12.25pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Blenheim Palace
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Wednesday 2 September:

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Alpha Online

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 in September. For further details contact Jacqui on 356993 or at stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com



Gospel Reading

The followers of Jesus didn't like everything he told them. Some things he talked about were difficult to hear and others were difficult to do.

Peter had just been praised by Jesus, for saying that Jesus was the Messiah, but as Peter listened now, he couldn't believe what he was hearing. Jesus was saying that he would have to suffer and die. 'I will be killed,' he said, 'but on the third day I will rise again.'

The Messiah can't die, Peter thought. 'God forbid it, Lord!' he said. 'This must never happen to you.'

Jesus got angry. 'You're not thinking as God thinks, Peter. You can only see things like humans do. If I thought like that, it would make me stumble instead of doing the right thing. Get behind me, Satan!'

This was hard for Peter to hear, but then Jesus told his followers to do things that sounded very tough too.

'If someone wants to follow me, they have to stop putting themselves first and take up their cross. If they want to save their own lives, they will lose them, but if they lose their lives following me, they will find them again.'

'What is the point of having whatever you want, if it means losing your life? What can someone give in exchange for their life?'

Jesus said, 'When the Son of Man comes in glory with his angels, he will repay everyone for what they've done. Truly, I say, some of you standing here now will see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom before you die.'

For the Children (& young at heart!)

In this week's Gospel Reading (Matthew 16.21-28) Jesus tells his friends what kind of King he will be; one that suffers. He tells them that they too will suffer if they follow him, by saying that they must be prepared to deny themselves (their old lives) and carry their cross. But, it is a promise that if they give up their old lives for the Kingdom of God, they will find the life they were always looking for.

Activities:

1. If you have a set of dominos, stand them up in a wiggly line, then knock them down in a chain reaction. Each domino knocks into the next one and 'passes' the chain reaction on. Just like Christians have passed the message of Jesus on for over 2,000 years.
2. See what you have at home that you can make a cross out of. It could be empty boxes, lollipop sticks or paper perhaps. Your cross can represent something that is hard, but is worth persevering at. Perhaps you struggle with something at school, perhaps you are worried or anxious about going back to school. Think about what this could be and then say the following short prayer: 'It may be good, it may be tough, but God you are with us and your love is enough. Amen.'

Song:

God beside

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xf8W6ITfwm8>

Let us pray together:

Lord Jesus, thank you that you went to the cross, and that through your death we can be forgiven. We are sorry for the times when we fail to pick up our own cross and walk in your way, choosing instead to do things our way. Help us to follow you always. Amen.

Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line.

0800 804 8044

Available 24 hours a day



Discovery Group

Meets via Zoom on Thursday evenings 8pm. Contact john.c.lambert@gmail.com for details.

Please pray with me

God of glory,
the end of our searching,
help us to lay aside
all that prevents us from reaching out to others.
Help us to mirror your love for us on the cross
by giving ourselves in service to those around us,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen



For your prayers

Please pray for:

- All those going back to school in the coming week.
- Those who are still trying to sort out university places.
- Those who are unwell, either at home or in hospital, and those who care for them.
- Our clergy and leadership team, including Eric, Christopher, Paul, Sue and our PCCs.

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.

Hymns/Songs of the Week

Breathe on me breath of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9s8BFHThfc>

God so loved the world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5Akz6J8Rw0>

Before the throne of God above

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LULK2nZ6sCc>

Take up your cross by Jaime Cortez

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l75oelQtlIq>

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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.

Items currently needed include Cup-a-Soup, Jellies (pre-made), Tinned Rice Pudding, Coffee, Rice (small), Toothbrushes, Toothpaste, Hand Soap, Anti-Bac Spray Cleaners, Washing Up Liquid, Deodorant, Laundry Wash Tablets, Shampoo and 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 with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email 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