

All Saints Church, Kempston
St James's Church, Biddenham

Virtual Church News

25 April 2021

4th Sunday of Easter



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 email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or call Jacqui on 356993.

This Week's Services

- Sunday 9.30am: Service at All Saints Church, Kempston Rural
- Sunday 11.00am: Virtch (Zoom)
- Monday 9.00am: Morning Prayers (Zoom)
- Wednesday 6.00pm: Virtch (Zoom)

Services in Church

This Sunday we warmly welcome you back to All Saints Church with a service at 9.30am. There is no need to book. Please remember your face covering (unless you are exempt from wearing one). You will be asked to follow a one-way system in place in both the church and churchyard.

We look forward to seeing you in person!

A Reading for the Week

John 10.11-18

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away - and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

Message from Revd Eric Lomax

Counting sheep is a well known and practiced cure for insomnia. Just imagine the most boring thing you could do, and it will send you to sleep. Counting an endless row of indistinct animals, in your head, that all look the same is a fairly fool-proof way of taking your mind off the worries of the day and helping you to drift off into dreamland.

If you were an actual shepherd this would be, I imagine, an essential activity. Every sheep is worth a significant amount of money to a Shepherd and, if one happens to stray, there would be significant consequences.

Jesus uses stories about lost sheep to remind us of how important we are to God. 'If a farmer has 100 sheep and one goes missing, then he would leave the other 99 in the fields, and go off to find the one lost one.' (Luke 15:4). This is a reminder that if we were lost, then God would be prepared to put everything else aside to help us find our way home.

The trouble with this is that we know that the Shepherd's real interest in the sheep is ultimately economic. Ultimately the destination of the sheep is for it to either be stripped of its fleece, or it goes to the slaughterhouse for its meat. No matter how much the shepherd loves their sheep, eventually, they have to sell the meat, and move onto the next generation of lambs.

The writer of John's Gospel, which is the most beautifully written of Gospels, upsets the apple cart on all the religious views of God. 'I am the good shepherd,' Jesus says, who does not exploit the value of his sheep, nor does he just see you as just one of a crowd, but rather recognises you and knows you by your name. This is the nature of a shepherd who truly loves his sheep. True love is not based on your economic worth.

Continued on next page...

Virtch (Online Church)



Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday, 9am on Monday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.

Message from Revd Eric Lomax continued

The rocky hills and wastelands round Judea were filled with dangers for stray sheep. Thieves or predators could destroy them in a moment, and the barren landscape would be filled with dangerous hazards and traps, not least the danger of the burning sun, and possibilities of starvation and dehydration.

The Good shepherd has come to find you, the lost sheep, and to take you on a pilgrimage through the hostile wilderness of your life to the places that he wants you to be. He will lead you by still waters, the psalmist says, and although we (you) walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we (you) will not be afraid, because he will be with us (you) (Psalm 23), his rod and his staff will protect us (you) and comfort us (you).

In addition to this, Jesus, in John's Gospel, gives us something even more precious to hold onto. The economy of shepherding means that there is only so far that the shepherd will go for his sheep. The risk assessment would not allow the shepherd to risk him or herself for the sheep. Jesus, however, is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus is, of course, predicting the nature of his death. Elsewhere he talks about the nature of his love; 'Greater love has no one than this, that they lay down their life for their friends.' (John 15:13). 'Love one another as I have loved you,' he says in the same sentence.'

Here the good shepherd becomes more like the sacrificial lamb found in the Temple on the festival of Pentecost.' The good shepherd becomes barely recognisable as a shepherd, he lays down his life for you on the cross, quite simply because he loves you. He is not bored to death by you, but rather he loves you to death. Jesus takes you by the hand and guides you through the difficulties you face, until you reach a place of safety.

Fear? Anxiety? You cannot sleep because of the troubles you face? Don't count sheep, but rather fix your eyes on the Shepherd, and he will settle you. 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.' Matthew 11:28.

God Bless
Eric

Let us pray...

Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection
and the life:
raise us, who trust in him,
from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,
that we may seek those things which are above,
where he reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



St James and Charitable Giving in 2020/2021

As with many organisations the finances of our church have suffered during the pandemic and the lockdowns. We have a clear idea of what our priorities are as a church in our relations with our communities. As part of our demonstration of God's love we aim to be a support of people, families and groups who are in difficulties, poverty, or who are suffering. However as good citizens we have to prioritise paying the necessary bills. Examples of organisations we have supported as a church over recent years are:

- 1) CMS (Church Mission Society)
- 2) Open Doors UK
- 3) Bedford Food Bank
- 4) Hebron Soup Run (Bedford)
- 5) Langley House Trust

So that we can continue during this difficult period (2020/2021) to support the great work these organisations carry out we have decided to ask people to give to a separate fund for Charitable Giving and Mission work. A special fund has been set up to carry out this aim and a generous member of our congregation has offered to match any giving pound for pound up to £1,800.00, making a total therefore of £3,600 for the two years ending 31 December 2021.

We would be very grateful for any donations to this fund which should either be handed to the Vicar or one of the Churchwardens **or** paid by transfer into the church bank account, using the details:

Bank: Nat West
Account: Biddenham PCC
Sort code: 60-02-13
Account number: 51317710

Very important

On the transfer details line please put "M & G" so the money goes to the correct fund.

Very many thanks for helping us to continue helping those in need.

Edwin Martin, Deputy Churchwarden

Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome.

Contact John Lambert for login details or if you have any prayer requests.

John.c.lambert@gmail.com



Bible Study Groups

If you are interested in joining a bible study group please contact John Lambert by email at john.c.lambert@gmail.com

Electoral Rolls & Annual Meetings

St James

Notice is given that the Church Electoral Roll of St James Biddenham will be revised by the Parochial Church Council. After such revision, a copy of the Roll will be exhibited for not less than 14 days in the Church porch.

Forms of application for enrolment can be obtained from stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or by calling Jacqui on 0778 6886 710. Completed forms should be returned on or before 4 May.

The Electoral Roll is akin to a membership list for the church. Being on the roll enables you to take part in the proceedings of the Annual Meetings, which will be held on Wednesday 19 May at 7.30pm.

Please contact Jacqui if you have any queries.

All Saints

Notice is given that the Church Electoral Roll of All Saints Kempston will be revised by the Parochial Church Council. After the revision a copy of the Roll will be published by the Parochial Church Council for not less than 14 days in the Church Porch. A copy of the Roll will be available for inspection on a reasonable request being made to the Council.

Application forms for enrolment can be obtained from Shirley by calling 07469 205938 or emailing shirleybrown2227@yahoo.com

In order to be entitled to attend the annual parochial church meeting on Wednesday 26 May at 7.30pm, and take part in its proceedings, your application form must be returned on or before 11 May. If you have any queries please contact Shirley.

Volunteer Vacancies

St James's Church is seeking to fill two volunteer roles - Website Manager and Barn Bookings Manager. Both roles can mostly be carried out from home and in your own time. They can be as big or as small as you make them!

If you are interested in either role then please contact Jacqui on 0778 6886 710 or at stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

Diocesan Job Vacancy

Part-Time Assistant Communications Officer

The Diocese has a vacancy for a part-time Assistant Communications Officer to work at Holywell Lodge in St Albans. If you are interested in this position, further details can be found at <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/other-vacancies/>

The All Age Bit!

We are again looking at the same reading as the adults this week. The reading can be found on the front page, although you may want to read it from your own Bible if you have one.

This passage is the story of the Good Shepherd. Have you heard this story before? What does a shepherd do? He/she looks after their sheep. Think about the ways in which a shepherd would care for his/her sheep (in the same way as you would care for a pet). But at the time when the Bible was written, shepherds would have needed to protect their sheep at all times of the day and night as there were wild animals around who might attack the sheep, or thieves who might try to take them away. Jesus used the image of a shepherd and his sheep as a picture to help us understand God's love for us. Jesus cares for us, protects us and was willing to die for us.

Activities

The lost sheep: Find a toy sheep (if you have one) or draw a picture of a sheep. Take it in turns with your family or carers to hide the sheep around the house. See how long it takes for the others to find the sheep. The person who has hidden the sheep could give clues such as 'warmer' when somebody is getting nearer to the sheep and 'colder' if they are moving further away.

A verse to remember: There are lots of references in the Bible to sheep. Try to learn the following one - you could perhaps come up with some actions to help your remember it, or write it out and decorate it so you have it as a reminder.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need." Psalm 23 v 1.

Songs

I just wanna be a sheep

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8GLj2Z7M6o>

All we like sheep by Don Moen

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

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the story of the Good Shepherd that reminds us of how much you love us. Thank you that you feed and protect us and that your son Jesus came to die for us. Thank you that we are not alone but are part of a flock, we pray today for all those in our church family, that you would protect them and provide for them. We pray for all those who don't know you yet, that they would hear your voice and come to know you as their shepherd. Amen.

Resources from Together at Home.

For more free resources visit tath.co.uk.

Suggested Music for this week

The King of love my shepherd is
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWfZ-8s71-k>

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FdUMqPzAvU>

Worthy is the Lamb (from Handel's Messiah)
[worthy is the lamb messiah](#)

Restore, O Lord the Honour of Your Name
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1g4p3v06lhk>



Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

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

Sunday 25 April

- 8.00am Three Counties Radio - weekly service.
- 8.10am BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship.
- 10.30am BBC 1 - Sunday Morning Stories.
- 1.15pm BBC 2 - Songs of Praise.
- 3.00pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Wednesday 28 April

- 3.30pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.



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.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. Join in from 13 to 23 May to deepen your own relationship with Jesus Christ, pray for five friends or family to come to faith in Jesus and to pray for the empowerment of the Spirit to be effective in your witness. For more details and to order a free prayer journal and other resources go to thykingdomcome.global

Time to Pray

Time to Pray App and Podcast presents everything you need for prayer. Available as an app (with integrated audio) or as a podcast. Listen and subscribe at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer/time-pray-app-and-podcast> or download the app from your usual app store.

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452
Mob: 07805 879537
Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

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