

Glastonbury Together in prayer

A news sheet for members of Glastonbury churches during the crisis caused by Covid 19



The power of Prayer

The power of prayer is spreading outside the community we considered our church family before the start of the current crisis. An online survey by the Tear Fund reported in Church Times says that some people have started to pray who have not prayed before. Similarly a number of people are watching church services online despite not previously attending church. As Christians we already know that prayer can make a difference, provide comfort and ease loneliness. These are sentiments that are backed up by over a quarter of respondents to the survey. Perhaps reflecting the different interaction with modern media a higher proportion of younger people are reported watching on-line services compared to the older age group. As a community we should take heart in this research, and particularly the age profile, and pray that when the crisis is over a number of these people will come to join our church communities—we must be prepared to welcome them with open arms as soon as we are allowed to do so.

God's sign of Hope

Around the country rainbows drawn by children have appeared in windows, doorways and gateposts as a sign of hope and as a thank you to those who are working to protect society during the current crisis. Of course many of us cannot get out to see these expression of thanks and hope but that does not diminish their significance in a time of trial. To Christians, and indeed to many other faiths the rainbow has long been a symbol of hope and of God's love. Chapter 9 of the book of Genesis describes the rainbow as a sign of a covenant between God and man, a covenant made to Noah that the world would not again suffer a great flood. In modern times that fact that we can provide a scientific answer to how rainbows are formed does not detract from their beauty. Together with much of our natural environment these colourful signs in the sky are a place where many see the works of God. In this post Easter season we rejoice in new life as we celebrate the risen Lord. In the northern hemisphere this coincides with spring and the new life that brings in both the plant and animal kingdoms. Rainbows too are often a sign of spring occurring at a time of sunshine and showers, weather often associated with spring in our land. Thank you Lord for bringing beauty into our lives.

A message from the Proverbs

With no sermons to write during the crisis, Jacqueline says that she has started reading parts of the bible not in the lectionary. She has been struck by the relevance of some of the proverbs. Quoting the NIV translation of Proverb 12:25 Jacqueline says "*An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.*" Please find someone to tell a kind word to. Finding someone to say a kind word to in person may be difficult at the current time, but remember to use your phone and social media to keep in touch.

Do you have any insights into the bible you would like to share with our Church community during this time? A comment feature has been added to the features page of the Churches together website where you can leave suggestions.



A Rainbow's Colours

Inspiration for a poem/hymn

On the Churches Together web site you will find a hymn calling for Christian Unity "A Rainbow's Colours" written by Michael Cobb secretary of CTiG. How did this piece come to be written and how does it speak to Christian Unity? Michael was attending a Methodist quiet day supporting his wife and helping with the refreshments. The theme of the day was colours and being in the autumn there were colours all around. Held at Bagley Baptist Church there was a big rainbow in the entranceway. This inspired the thought of how the rainbow is one but is broken into many colours and he saw this as a way of looking at the divisions in God's Church. The Church is the whole rainbow with the various denominations the coloured bands within it. Pondering on this thought on that day and later whilst walking in to Mass on various Sundays, he was inspired to write the hymn. The first verse "*A rainbow's colours in the sky, the beauty of God's love on high, don't let our ways pull us apart, love makes for us a single heart.*" reflects on how the light is broken into many colours but they are not separated from each other as they form a single whole.

A glimpse into 1 Peter 2

The lectionary readings for the 4th and 5th Sundays of Easter continue to follow the first letter of Peter. In their wisdom however the creators of the lectionary do not take the letter in the order presented by Peter. On the 4th Sunday the reading is towards the end of chapter 2 (1 Peter 2 19:25) and talks of our suffering in the context of Christ suffering for us. Following this on the 5th Sunday we go back to the beginning of chapter 2 (1 Peter 2 2:10) and read about the Church being built on the stone that the builder rejected. In the last issue of this newsletter Bernadette Farrell's hymn called for "walls made of living stone" this is a concept also taken up by Tom Wright in his discussion of this passage suggesting that the new temple long expected by the Jews is built all over the world by the living stones that are God's people. Reading through the whole of this chapter we see that the lectionary misses out verses 11:18. These verses however have a relevance to today's world as they talk about living in a pagan world, something we live with in Glastonbury to a some extent. In these verses we are told to be a light to the pagan world by our actions. By behaving well, which includes obeying the law of the land, we can silence foolish and ignorant people.

Do not be afraid

In a time of trial such as we find ourselves at the moment, held away from our normal social interactions and from celebrating in person with our Church family you might think that there would be much to be afraid of. Gerald Markland in a hymn written in the latter part of the 20th century tells us not to be afraid. The first two verses talk of walking through waves, and of fire burning all around us, concepts that can be seen as a way of describing troubled times, yet we will not sink beneath the waves or be consumed by the fire.

The later verses of this hymn are very appropriate to our current situation. Loneliness could be a feature of our enforced isolation but the hymn says we should remember that God is at our side. We still have our Church family with us in prayer so we are never truly alone.

The fourth verse talks of living exiled as strangers a concept that feels much like isolation as in a strange land we can be separated by our language and customs. But the verse says we should remember we are precious in God's eyes.

The hymn closes by reminding us that we are God's children who are loved with a perfect love. So the refrain "*Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are Mine.*" tells us that whatever befalls us we should not fear as God is always with us throughout our trials and tribulations.

Glastonbury Bridging the Gap

In a newsletter focussing on the Rainbow we cannot forget our local foodbank who use a rainbow in their logo. The financial reporting year for Glastonbury Bridging the Gap ends at the end of April and normally there would be an AGM where the year is reported, but this is uncertain at the moment. The foodbank has seen a number of changes during the current situation, some volunteers have had to step down to follow Government advice, new ones have joined the team and others have increased their support. Demand may be increasing but the random nature of referrals makes it difficult to quantify any change at the moment. The main change for Church members is the inability to drop of donations in kind or cash when attending your Church building to pray or for services. The foodbank still needs your support when you are in a position to give it. They have collection points at Morrisons, Nationwide and Earth fare. Cash can be donated direct to their bank — please e-mail glastonburyfoodbank@gmail.com and the treasurer will contact you with details of how to get money to the charity.

