

Glastonbury Together in prayer

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



Public services again

Churches in Glastonbury are starting up public services in our church buildings again. The first was Our Lady St Mary of Glastonbury with the first Mass held on 4th July, a vigil Mass for the Sunday. This was followed on 12th July with a service in St Johns which was also live streamed on Facebook and replaced the weekly zoom services the Anglican community have been holding. These are not services as we would have recognised before the government required our churches to close. Social distancing is required which limits the numbers who can attend. Singing is not allowed although a cantor is permitted a regulation that St John's took advantage of. At St Mary's there is now Mass twice on Sundays and a vigil Mass on the Saturday evening. There are also weekday and Latin Masses – details are on the Churches Together in Glastonbury web site.



Still worshipping remotely

The reopening of our Churches does not remove the need for online services. Now that they have been established it is likely that they will continue for some time, perhaps well into the future becoming a normal occurrence. Whilst they have been invaluable to keep our church families together during the crisis they have had a wider effect reaching people who were not reached before. They also allow the housebound to access services which is a need that will continue even when most can come back to worship in person. With that in mind

it is perhaps important that consideration is given to the elderly community who are most likely to have to stay at home and also most likely to have limited or no internet access. In years to come as people move into old age they will have and continue to have internet access but there is a gap in the current older generation that needs to be addressed. Many people in this category will have been regular church attenders in their earlier years so options to keep them in touch with their church family are important.

Parables today

The Gospel readings at this part of the lectionary year focus on parables, stories that teach us something about ourselves using examples from everyday life. The everyday experience today will be very different for most of us from the experiences in the Holy Land at the time of Jesus. So can our experience of the current crisis teach us anything? Care and compassion are certainly messages that spring to mind with the caring services applauded for their help. The value we place on aspects of our life is also something we can learn from. Which of the non church activities we used to undertake, but have been unable to do, do we miss most - are they really important could we live without them for longer with a simpler more God centred life? Who are the people we value most and do we as a society reward them with regard to their value to us? There will be many examples for all who read this, pray that you can learn from this time of trial.

Preventive measures

Controlling the risks

The government has issued guidelines for the holding of public worship which have been supplemented by advice from individual denominations but what are the risks? Whilst we can detect the virus that has caused the crisis using technology we cannot sense it ourselves. We also may not be aware when we have been infected and could therefore pass the virus on to others unknowingly. There are different risks, to the individual who may contract the virus, to society if the health service is overwhelmed by people in need and a reputational risk - if churches became a source of virus spread the adverse publicity would be damaging. The prevalence of the virus in our area is low which will mean the risk is low but with the consequences being high precautions need to be taken. Keeping socially distant is one way that limits the risk of those who are unknowingly infectious passing the virus on to others. We can also isolate any virus we might breathe out from others, by wearing a face covering to catch virus particles in our breath. The use of masks is becoming common with a mandatory use requirement for transport and in shops from later in the month, use in church may become a necessity. Hand washing facilities or hand sanitisation must be available for those entering the church. Cleanliness especially of hands is important when an article is touched by more than one person. For this reason the use of shared resources like hymn books is restricted - if they have to be used they should be quarantined for 48 hours after use. Service sheets are permitted but they should be single use and taken away by the user after the service.



Social distancing measures restrict the numbers who can attend Mass at St Mary's

Praise my soul the King of heaven

Written in the 19th century by Henry Francis Lyte, Praise my soul is a popular hymn occurring in a large number of hymnals. At the time it was written there was pressure to keep versification of the Psalms as close to the original as possible but the author did not follow that trend. Instead he used his own words through which he could keep the spirit of the texts but perhaps let his readers see the Psalms in a new light. Each stanza ends with a partial repeat that varies between hymn books sometimes repeating Praise Him but in other books repeating Alleluia before a final phrase. A strong hymn of praise to God it includes many of the concepts we very much need today, forgiveness compassion and support in times of distress. Through these ideas it is a hymn that also fits with the reading from Wisdom set for 19th July. Most hymn books now include the hymn with four stanzas missing out the original fourth stanza but perhaps in these times it has a renewed relevance and follows on well from the first three stanzas. *"Frail as summer's flower we flourish; Blows the wind and it is gone; But while mortals rise and perish God endures unchanging on. Praise him! Praise him! Praise the high eternal One."* We are certainly taught by the current crisis that life is frail and transitory and it is good to be reminded of the eternal nature of God.

A look at the lectionary - Wisdom 12

The lectionary readings for 19th July include a reading from the book of Wisdom sometimes know as the Wisdom of Solomon. This book is not in all bible translations so the revised common lectionary gives alternatives from Genesis or Isaiah. The book was written by Jews in Greek within a hundred years of the time of Christ. The reading comes from chapter 12 which starts by saying that, through the Spirit that is in all things, God corrects little by little those who trespass so that they may be freed from wickedness and put their trust in God. The chapter considers how God judged the enemies of the Jews, the Canaanites and in later verses the Egyptians, giving them an

opportunity to repent. The lectionary reading is verse 13 and verses 16 to 19 which look at the Sovereignty of God, who cares for all people and proves not to have judged unjustly. God's strength is the source of righteousness. Although sovereign in strength judgment is mild and God governs with great forbearance. The final part of the reading is a lesson for us: *"Through such works you have taught your people that the righteous must be kind, and you have filled your children with good hope, because you give repentance for sins."* These are words of wisdom that stand the test of time, as Christians we are a people of hope.