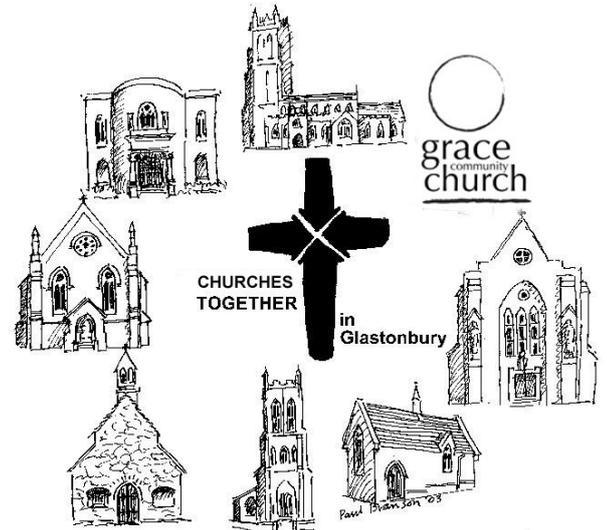


# Glastonbury Together in prayer

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



## Learning from History

There is a lot in the press and media about removing from view items that reflect an attitude that does not match our current view. Statues of people who had an association with slavery have been targeted, including one in Bristol which was toppled by protestors against racism. Not many years ago we had cries of indignation when the Taliban and Islamic state tore down historic monuments on the grounds that they were idols forbidden by scripture. Are either of these actions valid? Do they strengthen or weaken us? In Deuteronomy 32:7 we read *Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.* This suggests that we should learn from the past and how can we do that if we try to remove anything that does not conform with modern views? Should we judge those who lived in different times by the standards of today, which were not those of their time.

History is written by the winners and we can lose touch with the totality of life in past times. We hear of modern slavery so the concept of people forced to work has not been left behind in history. But what of the good slave owners who treated their workers fairly by the standards of the time. What about slave revolts and riots, have we written them out of our understanding of the past? If we try to judge former times by our standards and remove their memorials we risk forgetting about them and repeating their mistakes.

The Church left to us by Jesus Christ has been split and fragmented by the actions of man. We should learn from history to try and prevent any further splits and indeed to work together in unity so that we can better spread the good news of the Gospel

## Written in stone, our disunity.

The buildings of Glastonbury give witness to the splits mankind has brought to the Church over the centuries. Political splits brought about the dissolution of monasteries and the loss of the Abbey as a central focus and benefactor of the town. Splitting from Rome the churches that were left, St John's and St Benedict's, became what we now know as Anglican. A hundred years later in the 17th Century an independent church was set up. This for many years was a Congregational chapel. Moving on to the 19th Century we see the rise of Methodism which came about because Wesley believed that the church was not fully serving the whole of the

population. In Glastonbury there were several separate chapels built to serve the population brought into, or back into, Christianity by the Methodist movement. Only one of these chapels remains active as a Christian witness. In the 20th Century a Roman Catholic presence came back to the town and the present Church dedicated to Our Lady St Mary of Glastonbury was built. We also saw the development of a new independent Church which became the Grace Church. It is not all splits, however, as the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972, which incorporated the Congregational chapel, was seen at the time as a start towards Christian unity.

## Thanks for help

The foodbank originally set up by Churches Together has continued to operate during the current crisis. Recently a thank you e-mail was received with a request that it be passed on to the Churches. It reads:  
*- About 2 weeks ago I fled a terribly abusive relationship with nothing more than the contents of my pocket, no phone, no bank account, nothing. Today I received a very generous food bank parcel delivered to my door. I wept with relief and happiness, thank you all so much for your work and kindness. I am on day 12 of rebuilding my life, and knowing folk care and have helped has meant so much to me. Again thank you so much, and please pass my email to the churches together in Glastonbury so they know just how much their tireless work and fundraising makes a difference to those in need. with heartfelt thanks,*

# Small steps forward

## Thoughts from Rev Rowena Francis

Rev Rowena Francis has been writing to her congregation at Wells United church. Her thoughts on moving forward provide a different way to look at our journey towards the future. She writes:-

“A group of travellers had been sheltering in a hut admittedly during bad weather rather than a pandemic. Eventually the weather started to break and improve. In the glooming they emerged and started afresh on the journey to their destination. The light from the windows of the hut began to fade until there was little to guide them. Their direction was often mistaken and they had to rely on each other for progress made.

Not all the travellers shared the same feelings, one was frustrated, another trusting, one took heart from the adventure, another was fearful. It was strange and unprecedented. One or two decided to turn back. They were the only ones who knew where they were going for they were turning to light and familiarity. But those embracing the future were at a loss. The only knowledge they had was the wisdom they gained as they explored their way forward.

This is a parable for the world dealing with the pandemic and for the church seeking to move forward within that. Safety and certainty, routine and predictability are at an end. We are in a new situation. We need to trust that moving forward together will grant its own wisdom of the Spirit. The wisdom initially will be little and a bit all over the place, but slowly it will form sure patterns. However there is no way to prove this to those who stand hesitating in the doorway of the hut.

We do not need to be afraid as we step out into the world beyond lock down, or church in the ‘new normal’. For the reassuring and familiar text from Jeremiah 29: 11 says, ‘For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.’

We are also not alone, we have fellow travellers with us; some chance encounters, some family, some part of the fellowship. Together guided by the Holy Spirit we will find a wise way ahead. “



## One more step

Looking at steps forward brings to mind the hymn “One more step along the world I go”. This is a modern hymn written late in the 20th Century and found in ten hymnals. At a time when we are travelling to new times the refrain reminds us to keep travelling with the Lord. Whilst God is never mentioned directly in the hymn frequent references to “you” imply God to the reader.

The hymn has five verses and after introducing us to travel moves on to introduce aspects of the journey. As we turn corners and learn about the world God will be looking with us as we find new things. In verse three we consider the bad and good. We ask to be kept on the right road and take assurance that when we do not see the path God will guide us. In verse four we ask for courage for the rough times asking that as we travel we can stay loving, dancing and singing as we go. The hymn ends by acknowledging that God is both old and new as we repeat the request to keep us travelling with him.

The hymn was written by Sydney Bertram Carter who was born in Camden in London. He was a poet songwriter and folk musician he died in 2004 just short of his 89th birthday. Another hymn of his “Lord of the Dance” may be even better known being in nearly 40 hymnals.

## A look at the lectionary - How we interact

After coming together for a week the lectionaries return to covering the readings at different paces. The Revised common lectionary covers the whole of Romans 12 over two weeks but a week ahead of the Episcopal lectionary. The Roman Catholic lectionary, which often has shorter Epistle selections, only uses the first two verses in this period although a longer selection is suggested for weddings.

Romans 12 covers our relationships with each other starting by telling us to offer ourselves to God, if we let God change how we think we will know how to do what is pleasing to Him. It is this passage that tells us that just as the body is made up of different but important parts so is the body of Christ which is the Church. We have different gifts to give which we should use cheerfully to serve the community. Setting

out rules for Christian living we are told to love one another, hate evil and hold tight to the good. Following the Holy Spirit we serve the Lord by taking care of needy people and strangers. Importantly we are told to never stop praying.

In our relation with others we are told to ask God to bless those who mistreat us rather than asking Him to curse them. We should be happy when they are happy and sad when they are sad. Be friendly, make friends with ordinary people and do not mistreat someone who mistreats you. Try to earn respect and live at peace with everyone - do not try to get even but let God take revenge. For this advice St Paul uses scripture to back up what he has written and ends the chapter by telling us not to let evil defeat us but rather to defeat evil with good.