

Glastonbury Together in prayer

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



Season of Creation

The 1st September was declared the day of creation in the Orthodox church in 1989. This was taken up by the World Council of Churches who extended it to become a season of celebration lasting until 4th October which is the feast of St Francis of Assisi patron saint of ecology. For the 2020 Season of Creation, the suggested theme is "Jubilee for the Earth: New Rhythms, New Hope."

This year, amid crises that have shaken our world, we're awakened to the urgent need to heal our relationships with creation and each other. During this period we are asked to enter a time of restoration and hope, a jubilee for our Earth, that requires radically new ways of living with nature. It is hoped that all Christians will use this period to renew their relationship with God and with all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment. It is a time to reflect on the integral relationship between rest for the Earth and ecological, economic, social, and political ways of living. This particular year, the need for just and sustainable systems has been revealed by the far-reaching effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Everything has been shown to be interconnected. We have seen food supplies running out due to panic buying, whilst oversize packs intended for caterers were unable to be used. Reduced and empty public transport, empty offices with office workers working from home contributing to loss of economic viability. Our systems are designed for people being close together, we would like to see our churches full, but for now at least we have to find ways to work with lower numbers. As followers of Christ we share a common role as caretakers of God's creation. We should rejoice in this opportunity to care for our common home and those we share it with.

Open and opening

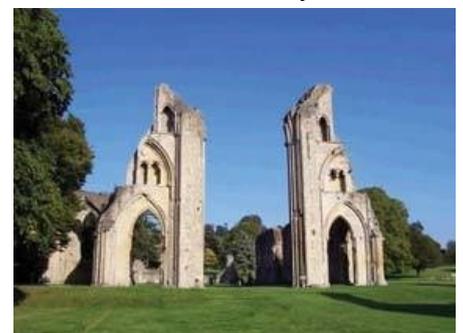
The churches in Glastonbury that have already reopened for services will not be affected by the restrictions on social gatherings introduced by the government. The Archbishop of Canterbury tweeted: "After contact with Government we hear that there is no change to guidance on places of worship. Worship is the work of God - not a social gathering - and gives the strength to love and serve." Since the last issue the United Reformed Church has resumed services and the Methodist Church will be restarting services soon, they have already opened successfully for private prayer. St John's continues to hold communion services which are streamed on the internet. Mass at Our Lady St Mary of Glastonbury is also continuing although notice has been given that there will be no public masses on the weekend of 19th/20th September.

Christianity in Glastonbury - the Abbey

In the last issue we looked at how the history of Christianity in Glastonbury was written in stone. Now we start a series looking at those buildings. Glastonbury Abbey is now in ruins but represents a long history of Christianity in the town. Starting in Saxon times the Abbey was built and enlarged over a period of centuries. The influence of the Abbots was great and one of them, St Dunstan, went from the Abbey to become Archbishop of

Canterbury in the 10th century. That is was an important site is evidenced by the doomsday book which records that it was the richest monastery in the country at that time. It maintained its wealth despite a major fire in the 12th century and by the 14th century was second in wealth only to Westminster Abbey. This all came to an end in the 16th century when under Henry VIII the monasteries were dissolved and thousands of monks dispersed.

There is a chapel in the Abbey that has hosted services in recent times and open air pilgrimage services are held most years.



Our common home

Revisiting the message of Pope Francis

With all the changes in daily life it is a good time to review our interactions with the world. Can we campaign to seek that the changes, brought about by our reaction to the virus, which help the environment can be extended instead of returning to our previous ways? In the season of creation is an appropriate time to look again at the message Pope Francis gave five years ago in his Encyclical Letter "Laudato Si". The season extends to the feast of St Francis of Assisi and it is his words with which to Pope opens the letter - *"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs"*. In the second chapter of his letter the Pope considers the Gospel of Creation giving an insight into the environment in scripture. Recognising that some of mankind reject the idea of a Creator, or consider the idea irrelevant he says that science and religion with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful to both. Faith convictions can offer Christians, and other believers, ample motivation to care both for nature and the most vulnerable in society. The symbolic and narrative language in the book of Genesis suggests that human life is grounded in intertwined relationships with God, our neighbour and the earth itself. This relationship is broken by sin so that the relationship between man and nature becomes conflictual. Pope Francis writes *"It is significant that the harmony which Saint Francis of Assisi experienced with all creatures was seen as a healing of that rupture. Saint Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence. This is a far cry from our situation today, where sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars, the various forms of violence and abuse, the abandonment of the most vulnerable, and attacks on nature."* We have seen various movements developed in recent years to "save the environment". Since we have been forced to change, to combat the virus, it is a good time to look in depth at our interactions with nature and campaign to protect our common home from our own failings.



Fruits of creation

September is the season when many churches hold their harvest festivals as we see farm vehicles on the roads transporting crops harvested from the fields. One of the hymns often used at this time is "for the fruits of all creation" written by Fred Pratt Green. Fred was a prolific hymn writer in the 20th century with this hymn perhaps being his most popular appearing in more hymnals than any other. The first verse gives thanks to God for the tasks associated with crops, ploughing sowing and reaping but also the silent growing of our crops during the night that God provides.

In the second verse Fred moves on to consider our efforts towards others - the help we give our neighbour and the tasks of caring for those who are hungry and despairing. These are tasks in which God's will is done a thought we need to remember in the caring we undertake.

In the third verse the hymn again gives thanks to God but for the less tangible harvest we get from the gifts of the Spirit. We thank God for the wonders around us, the truths we find hard to understand but most of all that God's love has found us.

Fred (1903-2000) was a Methodist minister so in his hymn writing continued the work of the early Methodists who taught God's message through song.

A look at the lectionary - Philippians 1

After following the epistle to the Romans for a while the lectionary moves to Philippians on 15th Sunday after Pentecost (Ordinary Time 25, Proper 20) which falls on 20th September this year. Paul is writing to the Church in Philippi from prison. He starts by giving greetings saying that he is thinking of them and has a special place for them in his heart. He is happy to remember them in his prayers. These prayers include that they will keep growing and know how to make the right decisions. He writes that he is glad that the message of Jesus Christ is being spread. The lectionary readings start at either verse 20 or verse 21. In verse 20 Paul hopes he will never do anything to be ashamed of, he wants to be brave whether he lives or dies. As the reading goes on Paul talks of a difficult

choice - he would like to die and be with Christ which would be better for him. On the other hand he knows that the church still needs him. He tells them that they must live in a way that brings honour to the good news about Christ. In that way they will be working together to get others to believe the good news. In our current time when many are taking care to keep safe from the virus perhaps we should be thinking in a similar way to Paul, do we pray for a better life with Christ or the chance to continue serving those who still need our help. If we have lived a good life we should not be scared of being called to Christ if we should succumb to this virus or any other. We should look to support each other whilst we can, but accept that we all have length of life known only to God.