

Glastonbury Together in prayer

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



Facing the crisis

This year our attention has been focused on the crisis brought about by the corona virus but our Lent course has been reminding us that we are facing another crisis that of climate change. Are we complacent thinking it will not happen to us, even denying that anything is happening despite evidence to the contrary. Jesus said he was sent to open the eyes of the blind, this should not mean those who are physically blind but all who are blind to what is happening, taking refuge in false hope and optimism that things are not all that bad. Jesus promised he would be with us always so we need to develop strength through prayer to face reality and work towards a solution. It may not be an easy road to follow and it is not a path we can follow alone. Action needs to be taken as a society which in our times means persuading politicians to make changes that encourage helpful behaviour. As churches we must show that change is possible. Jesus can inspire us and help us to change.

Perception of risk

How we perceive risk affects how we react to dangers in our lives. Behaviourists say we look at behaviours with a soon certain positive effect but ignore delayed uncertain negative effects. Examples include activities people may enjoy like smoking, drinking and even eating which may have long term consequences in some cases. Climate change risks are seen as delayed uncertain and negative so our behaviour is driven by the perceived positive benefits of actions that may cause climate change to happen. We need to work to turn this behaviour round by providing a reward for taking positive action and or penalising the wrong actions.

More care needed

In the last issue it was reported that infections in our area had risen and care was still needed. Since then the cases dropped off but have then risen again with the case rate in Street being well above the national average in the week to 10th March the latest figures at the time of writing. Glastonbury was actually down at that time but tends to lag Street by a few days so may have also risen before you read this. It is a time when we should think of hope. In a prayer of hope Donald Hilton in his compilation "Flowing Streams" prays: *When winter is around us, we cannot see the spring; but still we know, despite the snow that spring will come one day. When seeds are sown in spring time we cannot see the flowers; but still we know; prepared below a flower will greet the day. Though God is all around us, we cannot see his face; but still we know; Our love says so! God lives in every day. Amen*

The way of the Cross

In times before we were hit by a pandemic Churches Together in Glastonbury demonstrated the importance of Good Friday to the town by carrying a cross through the streets. Last year this had to be cancelled at short notice and a virtual walk sheet was issued so that church members could remember in their own homes. This sheet is still available on the Churches Together web site if anyone wishes to use it in 2021. In 2020 we were at the start of lockdown so everything was rushed and difficult. We have learnt a lot over the year and although we cannot yet show our presence to the town we are now able to

meet online to worship, study and pray together. When we walked through town this was preceded by a joint service at the top of the town. In 2021 it would have been the Methodist turn to host this event and they have agreed to hold an online service on Good Friday open to all. This year Churches Together have decided to supplement this with a joint online version of the Stations of the Cross later in the day. Details of both events, which will be held using Zoom, are yet to be finalised but will be circulated in time for Church members to join these events if they wish to do so.

The Annunciation

Nine months until Christmas

The feast of the Annunciation falls within the period covered by this newsletter being the Thursday before Palm Sunday this year. The date set is 25th March nine months before Christmas although in the western church it may be moved if it falls during Holy Week or Easter week, or on a Sunday. The feast celebrates the story, in the Gospel of Luke, where the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her she had been chosen to be the mother of a son who would reign forever with a kingdom without end. Luke notes that Mary was espoused to a man from the house of David. In Matthew's gospel the story is given from the male point of view which was the way at the time. It gives the genealogy of Joseph to show that Jesus was a descendent of King David. Although Mary would also have been a descendent of David in the world of the time this would not have been considered important. In Matthew, therefore, the Angel comes to Joseph instead of Mary to tell him it is fine to continue with their marriage plans and take Mary as his wife. Mary herself told the Angel that she would accept her destiny saying "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word*". The story has been the inspiration for a large number of artists such that it has been noted as the most frequent subject of Christian art, especially during the middle ages and renaissance. The message of the Angel to Mary is remembered in the "Hail Mary" prayer that is used when praying the rosary. The story of the annunciation can also be found in the Quran.



Ride on Ride on

The Henry Hart Milman hymn *Ride ion! Ride on in majesty!* Is very well know having been published in over 450 hymnals. It is a hymn that takes us from the triumphant entry to Jerusalem to the cross. In the first verse we hear the tribes calling hosanna whilst our meek saviour takes the road strewn with palms and garments. In verse two we move straight to the passion as Jesus in lowly pomp rides on to die. This is where the triumph begins over captive death and conquered sin. Despite the triumph we hear in the third verse of the angels watching with sad wondering eyes as the sacrifice approaches. In the fourth verse Jesus rides on in majesty towards the final strife as the Father waits and expects his anointed Son. Repeating the first two lines of verse two the final verse of the hymn then ends with "*bow your meek head to mortal pain, then take, O God, your pow'r and reign*". It is a powerful hymn often sung on Palm Sunday. Born at the end of the 18th century Milman was an author and poet who was appointed a poetry professor at Oxford. His "History of the Jews" was much criticised but it was noted that this showed that sacred history could be treated at once critically and reverently.

A look at the lectionary - 5th and 6th Sundays in Lent

For the fifth Sunday in Lent the lectionary gives us a reading from Jeremiah where we are told that the Lord will make a new covenant with the people. They will all know Him and He will forgive their sin. This is a forecast of Jesus dying for our sins. The readings move on to the fifth chapter of Hebrews where we learn that through obedience Jesus suffered which made him perfect and the source of salvation for those who obey him. In a reading from John's Gospel Jesus is visited by some Greeks, he tells them that a grain of wheat must die in order to bear much fruit. He says his soul is troubled but says he should not ask to be saved for this is the reason he has come to this time. Asking the Father to glorify his name through Him the assembled crowd hear God saying he has glorified it, this he says is a message for our sake not Jesus's own sake. The sixth Sunday in Lent is know as Palm Sunday and the triumphal entry into Jerusalem is in

many churches commemorated with the blessing and distribution of palm branches, sometimes folded into the form a cross. A short time later the story changes completely and we arrive at the Passion and death of Jesus. In a lectionary reading from Philippians, Paul writes that Jesus did not exploit his Godhead but took the form of a slave, obedient to the point of death even death on a cross. The story of the Passion in the Gospels is commemorated on Good Friday but the lectionary also puts this important message on this Sunday giving it an alternative name of Passion Sunday. This allows any who do not attend services on Good Friday to hear the important prelude to the good news the following Sunday at Easter. The reading of the Passion account is the longest reading set in the lectionary and in some churches is read as a part work with a narrator and other readers taking the part of Jesus and the other characters in the story.