

St Nicholas, Marston and St Thomas of Canterbury, Elsfeld

MARSTON & ELSFIELD MESSENGER

July 2020 ~ a church newsletter during lockdown

Dear Friends,

As I write this, all churches have just re-opened for private prayer and I am taking the opportunity to visit both of ours. For the first time in months I can enter, sit, reflect, and rest in the cool of this sacred space, while outside the heat of a June day is building. I can't stay long, but the sense of homecoming is overwhelming. I find it extraordinary; it is only two years since I became Curate here, but how I have missed this place! Even more, just one year from my priesting, and how I have missed celebrating the Eucharist here with you! What does that say about the church, about hospitality and about us as people?

It is true that I have felt that sense of homecoming in churches that I was visiting for the very first time, a fact which surely speaks about my relationship with God, of his hospitality and of his welcome, forever present for the prodigal son. But now, in St Nicholas Marston, and in St Thomas Elsfeld, I feel something for the first time in my life: a deep longing to give and receive communion physically rather than remotely, as it were in body as well as spirit. I know I can speak for all clergy when I say we long for that day to be physically in communion again as a church; but perhaps a blessing of this time of exile is that it serves to remind us just how central the Eucharist is to our 'being' as a church and how precious to us individually. That longing to be in communion in God and together in a sacred space is surely the longing described in the Book of Lamentations and in Psalm 137, the fifth verse of

which, in Hebrew, you may recognise on the wall that is behind me during my live-streamed compline services:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy.

So now, as we move into July we are, liturgically speaking, in Ordinary Time. With Easter behind us the time is *ordinary* until Advent and now we count off the 20 weeks after Trinity Sunday until All Saints' Day. But if we've learned anything through these months, it is that there is nothing ordinary about the times we are living through; and perhaps this is a good point at which to reflect on the extra-ordinariness of God's hospitality. It is the hospitality of grace and of the blessing of a welcome that need not be

earned. Since, when we reflect the light of Christ, offering the hospitality of the self, we reflect that blessed welcome of grace to the stranger, let me just add my thanks to all at Marston & Elsfeld for two wonderful years, for your welcome, your friendship, and for the opportunity to say "My, how I've missed you!"

Andy

Most gracious and ever-loving God, you remind us how very good and pleasant it is to live together in community. We thank you for your constant revelation of the extra-ordinary in the ordinary, in the every-day miracle of life, and in the blessings of your hospitality in creation. Whether we pray alone or together, may we always know that we are in communion with you through the blessing of Christ Jesus.

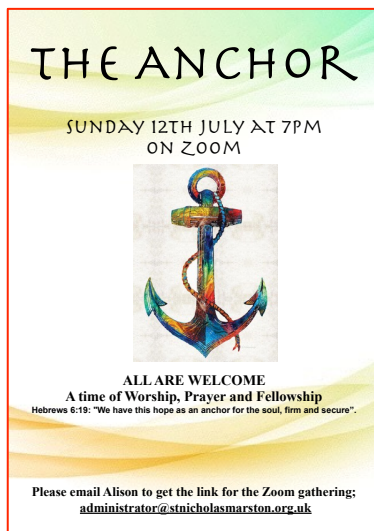
Amen

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Look out for the Divya Shanthi Virtual Event on Facebook and Youtube on Fri 24 Jul at 12 noon. More via administrator@stnicholasmarston.org.uk and St Nicholas Church Facebook account.

Coffee after Church Service

A group has been meeting for virtual coffee after virtual church. We get our beverage and then connect to Zoom at 11am for a chat. If you would like to join us, please contact Judith (764693) and she will explain how and add you to the group.



POSTER CHALLENGE



We need inspiring posters to go in the porch and in our boards outside church and the hall.

Can you help?

Winner get a free meal voucher for the Red Lion!*

Put your name and contact details on the back of A4 poster to enter, boxes to place your poster are in the church porch and outside the Vicarage.

* £80 worth! ALL AGES can enter.

Recipe: what to cook in lockdown?

Plum Jam

A St Anne's College chef made this in a recent bake off challenge, it really works, is great for a small amount of fruit and if you don't want the hassle of full jam making..

350g plums

100ml water

350g sugar

Stone and halve the plums, put in a pan and add the water. Simmer for approx. 45 min.

Add the sugar and keep on heat, stir occasionally until dissolved. Take off the heat and allow to cool, bottle into sterile jars. Store in fridge.

Nature notes: what to see during lockdown?

July is butterfly month. Ones to spot in your garden are small tortoiseshell, peacock, comma, gatekeeper, and small & large white. Look out for painted ladies too. You can usually find butterflies on buddleia (known as the butterfly bush) attracted by its fragrant, honey-scented nectar. Hedgerow flowers in July include hogweed (large white umbrella-shaped flowers), yellow and mauve vetches and teasel - the seeds are a favourite of goldfinches. Purple loosestrife flowers this month: look out for the tall pinky-purple flowers in damp places. Wildlife struggles in hot weather so don't forget to provide water in your garden or backyard.



And finally: what to quote?

In July by Evaleen Stein

Let us find a shady wady
Pretty little brook;
Let us have some candy handy,
And a picture book.

There all day we'll stay and play and
Never mind the heat,
While the water gleaming, streaming,
Ripples round our feet.

And we'll gather curly pearly
Mussel shells while bright
Frightened minnows darting, parting,
Scurry out of sight.

What if, what if, - heigho! my oh! -
All the "ifs" were true,
And the little fishes wishes,
Now, what would you do?

Tamsin Heatley would like readers to know that John Turner, also known as John Benfield (the actor), has died. He and his wife Lil lived in 'The Roses', 24 Oxford Road, Old Marston for many years before moving to Witney a few years ago. In December John found out his 2-year-long back pain was caused by cancer. He died on 16 June.