

**The United Benefice of the parishes of Melbourne,  
Smisby, Stanton by Bridge and Ticknall**



# **The Bulletin**

*A weekly publication for the Benefice*

**29<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

**The fifth Sunday of Lent – Passiontide begins**

**Join us for livestreamed worship on our Facebook page  
(Melbourne Parish Church) Sunday at 10.30 am!**



Dear All,

It was incredibly humbling hearing (even from the relative seclusion of the Rectory!) the applause ringing out for our frontline workers at 8 pm on Thursday night. A nationally coordinated tribute and act of kindness in these strange times. Manna from heaven!

Since the Prime Minister's announcement earlier this week, restrictions have meant that even our church buildings now have to remain closed – even to clergy, the archbishops recommend. I must admit, I have found that quite difficult to digest. However, a cartoon soon appeared online that depicted a closed church with a sign outside that simply read 'Building closed. Church open.'

So, in what ways are we trying to be open, to reimagine how to be the family of the church for now? Obviously, for the time being, all church meetings are cancelled, things like APCM's postponed until later in the year. This means that we are freed up to focus on the primary business of the whole church – worship, mission and pastoral care. So what is that beginning to look like?

**Worship** Our primary focus is livestreaming a Sunday service at 10.30 am. I was thrilled at how many people were able to tune in last week – especially those who ‘took the plunge’ by signing up to Facebook for the first time. We will continue to have orders of service available by email and online as well as being posted to those without access to computers. I will also aim to have a range of worship available over Holy Week leading up to Easter.

We tried a live **Angels Delight** session earlier this week which has also been well received. This included some action songs, a story and craft activity. We may also try a livestreamed ‘songs of praise’ where we’ll invite hymn choices and use them to create service. Watch the Facebook page for updates! Please do get in touch with your suggestions for worship we might be able to offer.

**Staying connected and pastoral care** The bulletin will continue to be a weekly publication to our whole benefice. As with last week, this will be available via the church website, Facebook page and email. For those without access to the internet, we are compiling a database for postal delivery. If there is someone you know who would like to be on that database, please let us know.

It has been heartening to hear that phonedines are glowing throughout our benefice! Ministry by phone is going to be invaluable through these next weeks and months, please keep calling one another.

If there are people in particular need or who are vulnerable, please do let us know as we can then work with our community agencies to ensure they get the help that is needed.

As I wrote last week, our ministry can be summed up ‘pray and pastor’. This continues as the church remains open for business.

### **From Bishop Libby**

It has been very good to hear regularly from bishop Libby. Earlier this week she wrote:

“Friends, it has been suggested that I might share some things that offer a degree of ‘normal’ in my own life, in these extraordinary times.

This in no way diminishes the struggle most are facing the pain many are feeling, the grief some are carrying: all that is constantly on my mind and in my prayers. But there are moments of normality still, and they offer me hope, comfort, and support – and help build my resilience.

I’ve been asked to let you know what is keeping me going, so here are a few of those things:

this week my husband and I baked banana bread together;

I'm waking early each morning and taking a cup of tea to watch and listen to the birds

We are on top of our laundry

I'm talking to my Mum and Dad, and my (grown up) children frequently

I'm trying to do a cryptic crossword every day.

We begin this briefing with a reminder that your well-being matters, and that we are wanting to support you to keep well. Whatever your moments of 'normal' might be, I encourage you to keep having them and let them resource you.

I also pray the Daily Office, and as I do, I pray for you. Go in peace.

+Libby”

We are all adapting to a new reality. In the midst of this, it is important that, like bishop Libby, we continue to find patterns to sustain ourselves. For myself, I am trying to ensure I spend quality time with my own family and try to shift an inch or two from my waistline through regular exercise. I am also continuing to prioritise spending quality time with God in prayer and aspiring to read more, too.

Over this past week and into next, it has been my privilege to help arrange seven funerals either in the crematorium or by the graveside. Last Saturday, before the suspension of weddings, Dan and Sarah were married in Melbourne with only a few of us present but still a very moving ceremony.

My prayers for you continue as I ask your prayers for me.

Much love in Christ,

*Steve*

### **Lent Talks:**

We had to abandon the Lent talks just as they were getting going but I guess that many people will have continued to read Stephen Cottrell's book and to reflect on what he has to say. These are my thoughts and I hope you may find them helpful.

### **Chapter 4 – The tenacity of love**

The idea that God loves each one of us may be challenging many peoples' faith at the moment. It can be hard to reconcile the statement, 'so God loved the world', a love shown in the person of Jesus, when so many people in our world are suffering great harm from the coronavirus pandemic.

So much that we probably took for granted a few weeks ago, has been changed. As Christians we are having to come to terms with locked and silent church buildings, something that a few weeks ago we would have found unimaginable. And, as Bishop Libby reminds us, we are having to rethink what it means to be church and how we are those individual lights of faith in a darkening world. What is church now and what will it be in the future?

Still, the church is more than the building, beautiful and historic though they may be. Church is the people who form the worshipping congregation; it is those who come, no matter how infrequently that may be, to mark the stages of their lives; and it is also the people who may never enter the building and have yet to respond to the challenge that God poses to all of us.

Even though the church buildings may be closed for an indefinite period, we are still church, and Stephen Cottrell reminds us that like the love of God we have to be tenacious in our love for others. He reminds us of the words of St. John, 'He loved them to the end.' (John 13:1) What is more, he reminds us that the love of God is dynamic; it is an active, ongoing form of love; not a one-off, grab it whilst you can form of love – but it is costly.

That cost is shown in, what Cottrell calls the final mile of Jesus' journey to the cross; he goes by himself, there is no disciple prepared to help him carry his burden; it falls to a visitor to Jerusalem to do this. Most of the disciples have disappeared; a few remain, mainly the women, but the rest have gone into hiding.

I found Stephen Cottrell's lengthy description of the mechanics of crucifixion a hard read but felt I needed to stick with it. The Romans seemed to take extreme pleasure in making suffering as graphic and painful as possible. The suffering that many individuals and families are experiencing at the moment is made graphic by the harrowing reports on the media. We watch in horror at the swift decline of so many into a lonely death. We feel the pain of the families who can only watch from a distance and cannot hold their loved ones in their final moments.

But, as Stephen Cottrell reminds us, even in the darkness of the crucifixion, in the darkness that covers the land at the moment of Jesus' death, there is hope. And it is in the cloud of darkness that the love of God is set free for all. Truly the love of God passes all human understanding!

But that is a hard message to comprehend when you are feeling crushed by the roller coaster of events and emotions that social media highlights for us each day. How can there ever be light at the end of this tunnel; how can we feel happy when loved ones and friends are taken from us; how can we sing God's praise in a land that seems to be becoming quite foreign to us, as the psalmist reminds says?

In my 1940s childhood sun light was seen to be a good thing. We were sent to the clinic for regular doses of light from a sun lamp; our parents sent us out in the garden to soak up the warmth and the light of the Sun. Light does

make things look different; the positioning of light sources in a room is both an art and a science. A well-placed lamp can transform a living space and alter how we feel. Perhaps when the coronavirus has been 'tamed' the idea of a love that transforms the darkness may not seem so alien. For Christians, the Cross shows us just how tenacious that love can be. Jesus could have fallen back into hatred and despair, but he chose another way. He risks all for love.

You can argue that our government is taking great risks as it works to contain the virus and ensure that a majority of people come through this awful time. Risks to the economic future, risks to social order, risks to peoples' mental well-being, risks to their future job prospects. People are being forced to accept a way of life that a few weeks ago would have been unthinkable but are for the greater good of all.

The love of God doesn't seek to force us into anything. Love is held out to us and the only ask is that we love God in return. As Mother Julian, the 14<sup>th</sup> century Christian mystic from Norwich wrote, 'This is his thirst; his love and longing for us that goes on enduring.'

The thing I really appreciate about Stephen Cottrell's writing is that he accepts that the ideas of the past are important and have much to teach us; but that we have to interpret what we read in the light of today. The mediaeval world was one where the sight and smell of death was an everyday occurrence. It is shocking to us that the images of death and mourning have become such a common sight on social media because people these days tend to die in hospitals or care homes; the physicality of death is no longer part of our experience.

If there is something good that is coming out of our changed circumstances and vulnerability it is that the essential goodness of most people has come to the fore. Truly love can transform the most terrible of circumstances.

Next week I will look at Chapter 5 – Enduring thirst.

Visit this place, O Lord we pray,  
and drive from it all the snares of the enemy:  
may your holy angels dwell with us and guard our peace,  
and may your blessing be always upon us,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Every blessing, Canon David K Edwards*

**A pattern for daily prayer, so that, at home or at church, we can pray together:**

**Monday:** Those in great poverty or need.

**Tuesday:** Those who have asked for our prayers: Ruth Barkaway, Anne Brazier, Roo Hubbard, David Ingram, Bob Smith and Margaret Stockley. Those in Derby's hospitals and hospices. All at Pool Cottage.

**Wednesday:** Our group of parishes.

**Thursday:** The church worldwide. All Christian people. The local church. The

Anglican Communion.

**Friday:** All in need, especially the hungry, poor and homeless.

### **The Departed**

In our prayers this week, we can remember those who have died recently, among them Dale Jackson, Elizabeth Fallon and Dorothy Jean Statt, and those whose anniversaries occur near this time among them Harry Stewart, Joan Twells, Alice Honner and Suzette Cooper.

## **The Readings for today:**

### **First Reading:** *Ezekiel 37.1-14*

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.'

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'

## **The Gospel Reading: *John 11.1-45***

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get

up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

**Additional Collect:**

Gracious Father,  
you gave up your Son  
out of love for the world:  
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,  
that we may know eternal peace  
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

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