



The Benefice of St Mary's, Chalgrove
with St Helen's, Berrick Salome



Issue 3 | 6th September 2020

Pews News

Welcome

Welcome to the updated Pews News, which we aim to publish monthly. Unlike the old Pews News, which was circulated in print form, we are making the new Pews News available electronically. If you are not able to access the electronic edition, please be in touch, as we are printing some copies for those who need them.

This month's edition has readings for the coming Sunday (Trinity 13), an excerpt from Fr Michael's most recent, an article reflecting on lockdown by Dr Marian Shaw, details of Ride and Stride, and APCM information.

This Week's Service (Trinity 13)

This week's service in the benefice is the Online Children's and Families' Service. Next week (Trinity 14), we have Methodist Worship Book Communion at St Mary's, beginning at 10am, presided by Revd John.

Our YouTube channel can be accessed using a YouTube app on a smartphone or other device (including Smart TV), or you can access the channel in a web browser by following this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/stmaryschalgrovewithsthelensberricksalome>

; if you have a smartphone, you can even access the channel by pointing your camera at the Quick Response code image in the margin to the left.

Other Worship Resources

The Oxford Diocese service, called Church at Home, is available here:

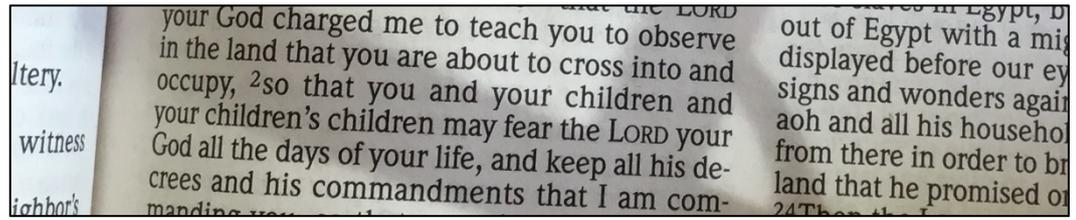
<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/podcast/church-at-home-full-service/>

The Methodist circuit has a website for their weekly worship resources. You can access this here: <https://oxfordmethodistsworship.wordpress.com/>

Finally, for a trial period, we are making sermons available using a dial-a-sermon call-in facility. If you would like to use this, please call 01491 529988



The Gospel for Trinity 13: Matthew 18.15–20



‘If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.’

*For where two or three
are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.’*

Excerpt from Fr Michael’s Sermon on Hope

First Preached 26th July 2020

*We know that all things work together for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8.28*

This is not a statement of mere optimism. St Paul was no ingenue. He did not believe that the world in which we live was the best of all possible worlds. Rather, his entire world view was shaped by the fact of the cross, the sad fact that in *this* world people slandered, betrayed, and crucified God on trumped up charges. *This* world is a world that stands in sharp distinction to a Creation made new in which God will be all-in-all. For Paul, *this* world was caught up in a state of cosmic rebellion; its capacity for decay permeated literally all things—from natural disasters to our own fearful and wonderful nature, which even in its highest loves is coloured by terror of our own weakness, and a pathological lust for control. Paul would not have been surprised to discover that the sun will, one day, either sputter and sink into a dwarfish dotage or angrily blow itself and this cosmic neighbourhood to smithereens. Nor would he be surprised to discover that one day, in the cosmos, all light will die—forever. Creation, he states, is subject to ‘vanity’.

And so, if St Paul did not believe *this* world in which we live was the best of all possible worlds, and he certainly did not believe that we are the best of all possible people, what gave him the hope that he expresses here? Well, he understood *this* world as the theatre of divine redemption—the stage on which is performed God’s great drama (on the cross and in the resurrection) of buying back humanity (and by extension the cosmos) from its slavery to itself (or to something worse). *This* world may not be the best possible world, but it is the world in which salvation is possible. And salvation here means not less

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than having access to the life of Jesus Christ—a life that exceeds all of the possibilities of the world as it presents itself to us, and to Paul. This is nothing less than to talk about being remade by a power from beyond the confines, and the limitations, of *this* present cosmos.

In terms of process, I think Paul saw our participation in the life of Jesus as key to our transformation. That is what he means by

*those whom he predestined he also called;
those whom he called he also justified;
those whom he justified he also glorified (v.29)*

The goal of our sharing in Christ's life is glory. And by this, I don't mean just splendour; I mean the full indwelling of ourselves in Christ, who inhabits us with the same fulness with which he inhabits and is inhabited by the fulness of God. And glory, for Paul, stands in stark contradistinction to the weakness and fragility of the present ordering of the world—a fragility that poisons our loves with a desire for security so keen that it makes tyrants of us all. A glorious creature is gloriously free to love, precisely because in being remade indestructibly glorious, it is free to love indestructibly. A creature remade for glory is at long last able to dimly reflect the yet more glorious fearlessness of God, whose ceaseless, attentive, yet paradoxically impassible, love can never be diminished or distracted or avoided or undone.

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And yet, for Paul, this process of transformation is the result of a great mystery: that we be “conformed to the image of his Son”? Conformity to the image of Christ is the mechanism of transformation for Paul. This is clearest in an argument he makes elsewhere. In the epistle to the Philippians, he talks about being conformed to the death of Christ in order that, somehow, he might attain to the Resurrection of the dead. He also describes the moment of final transformation of the Philippians themselves, when the bodies that characterise their present humiliations are conformed so as to be like the body of Christ's glory. The picture we get is that the work of Christ in us—that great act of remaking—is a function of the many small deaths we encounter as we follow him. In this, our imitation of Jesus Christ gives a kind of narrative shape to our own salvation: we freely accept the many and various small (or indeed large) crucifixions that a world liable to judicially murdering its god might impose upon us, and these indignities in God's hands are woven into the very garments of Jesus. Paul goes on to quote the Psalms (44.22):

*‘For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.’*

We see hints of some of these indignities in some of Jesus' parables. The Kingdom of God is a seed too tiny to be worth bothering with; it has terrible optics because, like yeast, it is known only in its effects on the dough, and it appears to be doing very little most of the time; it may be precious, like treasure, but it can be passed over without notice; and, indeed, like a pearl, we might be forgiven for thinking that it is discovered only by chance. And yes, all of the parables witness to these impressions being misperceptions, for the

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kingdom is cosmic in its claims, perpetually active, more precious than all things, and revealed by God Incarnate himself. But ... and as a national church we need to hear this, for we are used to being noticed, we are obsessed with optics, and we are always, always in perilous danger of treasuring the wrong things (like influence, or popularity, or Twitter likes for the latest [always on-message, but often vacuous] episcopal affirmation of the Zeitgeist) ... the parables attest to neglect, underestimation, derision, misperception, and misrepresentation being the stock experience of God's people in the world that crucified God—with our true leaders being the ones who walk ahead of us behind Jesus along the road to die. And it is how we handle ourselves in response to this set of experiences that tells us whether we are really here for Jesus or for something else. And if we are not here for Jesus, then we can't really expect the glory!

So, in brief: St Paul insisted that the world was almost impossibly dark, yet that it was also redeemable by an act of almost impossible exchange on the cross. And it is in following Jesus through death and resurrection that human beings like you and me, and ultimately the cosmos itself, might be remade to bear the radiance of the unimaginable glory he radiates. This is why, for Paul, we are “more than conquerors”. This is why “nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus”. We are not optimists; we hope.

Please Pray

Please pray for Fr Michael, Revd John, and the PCCs. Pray especially for our Tuesday Cleaners, our flowers teams, our Wednesday Stewards, and all who contribute to our public worship on Sunday.

Please pray for the families of John Hoddinott, Suzanne Jackson, and David Viall, and for all who mourn.

Please pray Fr Patrick, Fr Daniel, Canon Sue, our neighbours.

A Prayer of General Thanksgiving

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,
we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks
for all your goodness and loving kindness.
We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your immeasurable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.
And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful,
and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips,
but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service,
and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honour and glory, for ever and ever.

*“... for the means of grace,
and for the hope of glory”*

Reflections from Berrick on Lockdown

Dr Marian Shaw writes about “The Missing 100 Days”

The Covid-19 months have witnessed a roller-coaster of emotion and constantly-changing plans. The closure of St Helen’s seemed to be a drastic step at the time, and upset the rhythm of village life for many of us. In hindsight, of course, we recognise that this was clearly necessary, and now that we are tentatively re-opening, we find ourselves wondering whether our 100 locked-out days were the longest closure our Church has ever had.

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During its thousand-year existence, the church has seen many ups and down, each crisis affecting the local population in different ways. When King John had a spat with the Pope in 1208, he was excommunicated and no churches were allowed to hold services for 4 years as a punishment. But when the Black Death in 1348 hit virtually every town and village in England, churches were not closed – indeed, people looked to them for protection. Tragically, as they gathered together without social-distancing, the ‘pestilence’ - largely asymptomatic until 5 days before death - had plenty of contagion opportunities, wiping out an estimated 30%-40% of the population. Priest mortality was especially high, as there were confessions to be heard and last rites to be administered. Incumbents were on the front line, like our NHS staff today. Fortunately Simon de Weedone, Vicar of St Helen’s and St Mary’s at the time, was spared, and went on to minister to the benefice for another 19 years.



With today’s more advanced (albeit not perfect!) epidemiological understanding of disease transmission, we can look back in history with sympathy while struggling to come to terms with the safest way forward. We have a better understanding of some aspects of a pandemic, so this time people were locked out of churches for their own safety. Apart from the King John episode, the answer to our question seems to be that yes, this has been the longest deliberate closure of the church. But now, after 100 days, St Helen’s Church is open once again, for private prayer every Wednesday and for services at 10am each third and fifth Sunday of the month.

What have we learned in all this? We are now all adept at hand sanitisation, careful spacing, and Zoom meetings – but how will this change our future practice? To what extent will online streaming continue to complement our traditional face-to-face gatherings?

And what of Fr Michael's baptism of fire? Hardly had he unpacked in the Vicarage before he was booby-trapped by Covid-19 and found himself going through the steepest IT learning curve of his life. But he did it – and we all been comforted by his streamed services and prayers. Thankfully, unlike priests 700 years ago, he is armed with knowledge and PPE to guard against infection in going about his priestly duties. Congratulations, Michael!

Ride and Stride

Saturday 12th September 2020

Oxford Historic Churches Trust (OHCT) are organising this year's Ride and Stride for 12 September. St Mary's will have a sign-in desk in the Church porch doorway for visiting cyclists and walkers who will be sponsored for walking or cycling around churches.

Lynn and Charles and Bob with Patricia intend to raise funds for St Marys and the OHCT by walking round local churches.

This is the major fundraiser for OHCT, who give grants to churches in Oxfordshire for refurbishment. St Mary's received support from them during its major refurbishment. Please phone me if you would like to take part or sponsor one of our walkers.

Carole Heath-Whyte 01865 890442.



It is Annual Meetings Time Again

6th September, 2.30 St Mary's; St Helen's Date and Time TBC

The Church Representation Rules require churches to hold annual meetings (APCMs) each year and to hold elections for Churchwardens, Deanery Synod Members, and Parochial Church Council Representatives.

For very sensible reasons we postponed our APCMs earlier this year, though we cannot postpone them indefinitely. Technically, we were required to hold them before the end of May, but as nearly every church in the land is in the same boat, we have been asked to conclude our meetings before October.

APCM meeting packs have gone out to everyone on the electoral roll at St Mary's, in time for our meeting, and notices have been placed on the porch noticeboard. St Helen's packs will be forthcoming.

Please do join us and take your part in the life of Christ's church.

Fr Michael



Other Notices

“Thank you for your kind wishes for my ‘stay-cation’. Kirsty, the girls and I had a lovely time camping in the garden (thunderstorms notwithstanding). It was just what we all needed!

Particular thanks go to Revd John, Bob Heath-Whyte, Fr Julian, and Matthew Clark for taking care of the Daily Prayer services online. If you would like to contribute your time, or skills, or prayers to this work, please contact me.”

Fr Michael

Do you have items for the next edition?

Please be in touch with Fr Michael by email.

Contact Details

When writing cheques for the church please make them out to “**St Mary’s PCC, Chalgrove**” or “**St Helen’s PCC, Berrick Salome**” – this avoids ambiguity!

Websites you might find useful:

St Mary’s: www.chalgrovechurch.org

St Helen’s: www.berricksalomechurch.org.uk

For all enquiries contact Fr Michael Lakey, tel: 890392,
vicar@chalgrovechurch.org