

# intouch

NEWSLETTER

Benefice of Clothall, Rushden, Sandon,  
Wallington, and Weston



## Welcome to this issue of In Touch

As we begin to come out of lockdown and, hopefully, move towards a new kind of normal; I am delighted that we have been able to get the church services up and running in a measured way. We started at Clothall and were made so wonderfully welcome by those who were there and with sensible social distancing soon found ourselves lost in the warmth of shared faith and community. There was a real sense of rightness and hope filling their air. Last Sunday we were welcomed again at Rushden on a lovely sunny afternoon and the church was full in the new way that churches can become full as we are rightly mindful of each other's safety. Once again, we spiritually embraced each other and filled the church with our voices and there was a lovely feeling of peace as we spilled out onto the grass where, we laughed, smiled, and shared news. This Sunday we are at Sandon, so please come and join us – our churches are wonderfully safe places to be and to start renewing links, friendships, and share experiences. **With blessings Fiona**



## Eternity in the human heart

Canon Paul Hardingham considers the times of our lives



*'He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.'*  
(Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The 60s hit 'Turn! Turn! Turn!' by the Byrds is based on verses in this chapter: 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.' The different seasons of life are not random, for God is in control and His timing is perfect: 'He has made everything beautiful in its time.'

The verse goes on to say that God 'has also set eternity in the human heart.' This means that we all have an in-built sense that there's more to life

than what we can see, as we search for meaning in life. However, we can fill our lives with other things: career, pleasure, shopping and relationships. While good in themselves, these things can never ultimately satisfy. It is only a relationship with God through Jesus that truly satisfies. How does this challenge us?

Firstly, we are to live for God in all that we do, knowing that it all counts for eternity. This includes helping others find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ for eternity.

Secondly, we accept that there is lots in the current 'season' where it's difficult to know what God is doing: 'no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.' However, we do know that everything has consequences for eternity.

Finally, how can we be more aware of eternity every day? Spending time with God in worship and prayer will bring us the true pleasure that belongs to eternity.

*'You made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.'*

(St Augustine).

## The Slide

As I watch

She climbs the steps steadily,  
Holding the handrail,  
Her two-year old feet following each other  
Rhythmically, unhesitatingly  
To the platform at the top  
Where she sits down  
And freezes.  
Holding tight to the sides,  
Knees up, feet flat  
She judders down a little way  
Then looks up.  
Her eyes meet my smile, my outstretched arms –  
And she takes her hands off the edge of the slide,  
Shooting forward with a squeal of delight,  
Trusting the love she knows.  
Lord, I have climbed so steadily,  
I have come so far, in my own strength,  
Holding on, holding back,  
Sometimes freezing.  
But I am your child,  
Today I will lift my eyes  
And meet your smile, your outstretched arms,  
I will lift my juddering feet –  
And take my hands off the edge of the slide  
Released to ride, by your Spirit,  
Into the freedom of your will,  
Trusting the Love I know.

By Daphne Kitching





## Giovanni Bellini: *Madonna of the Meadow* (c.1500)

Look once then look again. If we received this as a Christmas card we might admire its contemplative beauty as Mary, the rich blue of her robe an appropriate cradle for her innocently sleeping son, gazes at him in placid prayerfulness. Behind them the landscape unfolds in beguiling pale springtime light, fields giving way to a walled hill town beyond. Further out solemn mountains rise to the serenity of high unhurried clouds. Stillness falls peacefully across the noiseless scene.

As a Christmas card we would stand it with others and allow it to recede into the general flutter of yuletide robins and brightly lit snow bedecked churches. But our second look is

disquieting. The stiffness of the child's right leg worries us; his cold immobile sleep causes us to question whether he still lives. His right arm placed across his breast recalls preparation for burial. Does Mary wait in fearful anticipation of her son's dying within her own lifetime?

Now look beyond mother and child, where Giovanni Bellini divides his landscape in two. To the right livestock is closely tended by a watchful herdsman. The fortified town behind suggests orderly governance. Its solid walls distil security and peace; they may further allude to Mary's virginity. Yet to the left we read a different tale. Here a herdsman lazes on the ground, careless as to his manner of dress and

paying no attention to the livestock in his charge. He sits close to a tree whose trunk has been reduced to a stump, and though saplings arise from the same root they have yet to put on fresh leaves. Perched in their topmost branches is a wakeful crow, a carrion-fed symbol of death vigilant for opportunity. So the right side of the painting depicts conscientious industry, the left lassitude and dissolution.

But that barely noticed tree stump is significant. 'There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse' declares Isaiah 11.1, 'a branch shall grow out of his roots'. And between the tree and the indolent cowherd stands a bird, wings spread, preparing to do battle with a snake, the Bible's deepest rooted symbol of evil. The bird is sometimes seen as a pelican, legendarily believed to open its breast to feed its young, and hence symbolic of Christ giving his body and blood. But more likely it is a crane whose appearance portends spring and new life, with Bellini inviting us to identify it with Christ. So the deep peace of this painting is deceptive, depicting as it does the battlefield upon which Christ lives and dies, and in doing so triumphs over evil to achieve resurrection.

**Revd Mike Leverton**

## Food Banks

Last week I sent out the local Food Bank letter and there has been such a lovely response already to this. At this time when so many are losing their jobs and suffering other financial problems it is very important that we see people are not just fed but have the other basic requirements for caring for those they love and have responsibility for. With each letter the Food Bank gives a list of what is really needed at that time and this helps us to respond accordingly. If you are like me then that list is invaluable as it helps me to focus when I am shopping. This Saturday you have an extra opportunity to give as Wallington Village Hall will be open from 10 am to 1pm to receive donations to be delivered to the Food bank. Clothall church has a box in the

porch for donations and this will be dealt with regularly as well. **Keep reaching out, there is so much we can do.**



### Shopping List

Items urgently needed:

- Shampoo
- Shower gel
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste
- Toilet Rolls
- Size 5&6 nappies
- Sponge Pudding
- Tinned Rice Pudding
- Tinned Custard

## A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy.  
Sustain and support the anxious,  
be with those who care for the sick,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may find comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us  
from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
**Amen.**

If you would like to donate to any of our churches in the current crisis - details are below. We would be very grateful in your help to keep our churches going.

**Thank you.**

### PCC OF RUSHDEN

LLOYDS BANK: 30-94-30 A/C 01845350

SANDON PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL  
BARCLAYS BANK: 20-73-26 A/C 53610802

PCC ST MARYS CHURCH WALLINGTON  
LLOYDS BANK: 30-94-30 A/C 01845466

WESTON PCC  
BARCLAYS BANK: 20-41-12 A/C 40946850

PCC OF CLOTHALL  
LLOYDS BANK: 30-94-30 A/C 01845245



## In memory of Chris Whitton

If you are passing Rushden, you might like to pop in and see the new headstone placed in memory of Chris Whitton by his family. Chris was a much loved and respected churchwarden for many years and this beautiful headstone was created by the Cardoza-Kindersley Workshop.



"Looks like no one was available to fill in for the vicar's annual holiday again."