

# intouch

NEWSLETTER

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



*Lighting the night  
with hope!*

*We are still encouraging everyone to put a candle in their window at 7pm each Sunday night as a sign of hope, community and support for all those who are working for our health and safety.*

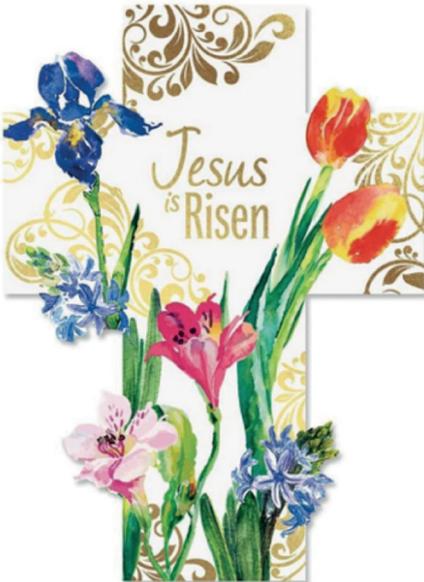


### **A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus**

*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.*

## Easter Greeting to you all!

*Well Easter is here and with it the signs of spring are growing stronger and stronger. It feels strange because I think that many our hearts are still in winter as we continue to hibernate in lockdown. But spring is here and I see its shoots everywhere, not just in the greening up of the world around me, the bright dots of flower and warm haze of blossom – these are the usual welcome signs.*



But what I see are the burgeoning shoots of compassion, understanding, community and fellowship – of truly understanding each other’s needs and what life might be like for other people. Patience and good humour in the face of adversity are blossoming as surely as the cherry trees and a deepening thankfulness for all that we do have in the face of all that we are losing. As ever, my prayers go out to all those who have lost loved ones, for all those who are suffering financial stress and those who are missing family. As sure as spring follows winter we will come though this. With my blessing to you all. **Fiona**

### The Rectory

## St. James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

*You closed your last letter with the remark that it was time to retire to bed with a cup of cocoa. That may be all very well for the pious intensity of a theological college - although a stiff whisky was always acceptable in my day - but it is not a style to continue once in the parish. I do feel obliged to give you a few hints about what should and should not be drunk in public as a parish priest.*

*Morning visits are to be discouraged, but if one is unavoidable, and you are invited to have a drink, then it has to be coffee. It is the only time of day when a mug is acceptable - provided, of course, that it is china. In the afternoons one changes to tea, but only from cups. Blended varieties may be all very well for Curates in their first year, but it should be Darjeeling for an incumbent. Fruit teas are for Quakers only.*

*If an inappropriate vessel is offered, then the drink should be accepted, but left untouched. Since the visit will be discussed in the finest detail throughout the parish the moment you have left, your host will soon learn why and not make the same error a second time. It is for the same reason that if you ever want to circulate a piece of news round the parish as quickly as possible, never put it in the parish magazine, just mention it casually during one of*

*your visits. Everyone will know by tea time.*

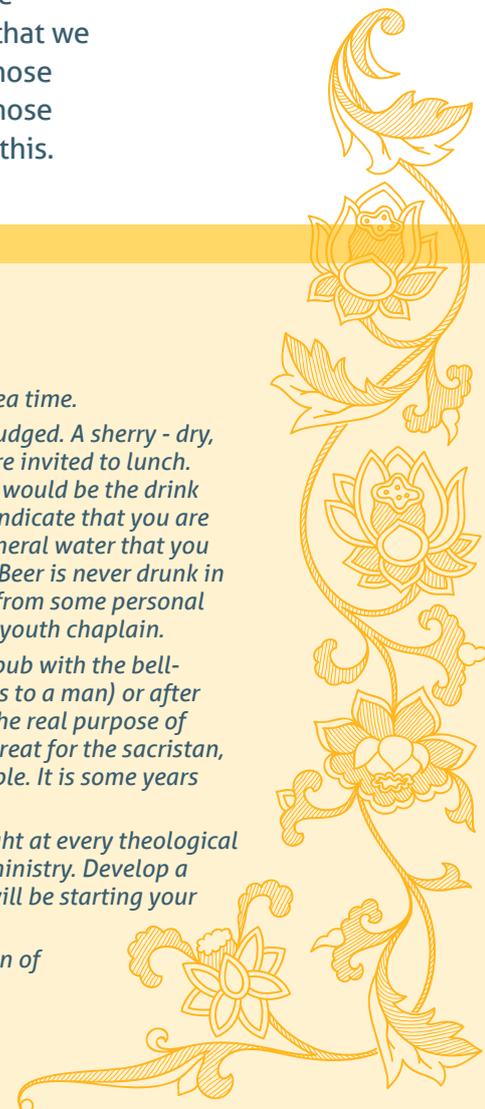
*Alcoholic drinks must be carefully judged. A sherry - dry, naturally - is probably best if you are invited to lunch. In the early evening a gin and tonic would be the drink of choice. To ask for whisky would indicate that you are about to go over to Rome, and a mineral water that you have your roots in non-conformity. Beer is never drunk in someone’s house unless you suffer from some personal tragedy such as being the diocesan youth chaplain.*

*However an occasional beer in the pub with the bell-ringers (who will be real ale fanatics to a man) or after choir practice - which seems to be the real purpose of holding practices anyway - or as a treat for the sacristan, will show you are a man of the people. It is some years since I visited the pub.*

*Understanding wine should be taught at every theological college as an essential part of the ministry. Develop a taste for claret, dear boy, and you will be starting your journey towards high office.*

*And perhaps you should give that tin of cocoa to the verger.*

Your loving uncle,  
Eustace





## A Cross in the Countryside

### Stanley Spencer: The Scarecrow (1934)

Revd Mike Leverton reflects for us on a favourite painting

He noticed the scarecrow whilst painting one of the landscapes which provided his bread and butter and gave him time and space for more ambitious but less easily saleable creations. Stanley Spencer always sought subjects expressive of a spirituality in which Christ was deeply involved, but which was much broader than that typically preached in churches.

We are on Rowborough Common, near Spencer's home in Cookham, a place which was for him never further than one step away from heaven. The scarecrow stands in an abandoned plot of land used as a dump. Spencer wrote that it appealed to him because 'left and deserted... it was like a person slowly changing into a part of nature'. But also, with Spencer, we see a crucified figure brutally lashed up to a rusty metal pole standing in its own Golgotha, a ragged man, a straw man of sorrows, only half a man with his stuffing sticking out. The huge deformed shoulder is a log thrust in for rigidity and that extraordinary crown of a hat mocks the head fallen forwards, if there is a head at all.

A ludicrous character then, to be jeered at and scorned like Christ on the Cross. But we see that the twine tied from arm to arm and fed through a metal loop on top of the pole is taut. The scarecrow must take the full weight of his monstrous ravaged body, just as Christ takes the full weight of a fearful, misguided world in his broken body on Good Friday. As a reminder of the travails of the world, Spencer is careful to include, still fairly new and bright white, the village war memorial near the top right of the canvas.

The following year Spencer returned to this theme, substituting the figure of Christ for the scarecrow and including a cast of village characters going about their daily business, as if to ask 'Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?' Some though are there to mourn this scarecrow Christ with his right shoulder still jerked, log-like, grotesquely upwards; the war memorial remains visible beneath the rickety cross-beam Spencer has added.

So Spencer makes explicit what was implicit in 'The Scarecrow', a reminder that the cross and its concerns is never far from us, even in the English countryside. For many in our world have heavy crosses to carry, endless burdens to bear. Christ on the cross surveys his world, our world, with a love that sets aside his humiliation, and soon will set aside his death also.

## Easter Thoughts

*The world cannot bury Christ.  
The earth is not deep enough for His  
tomb, the clouds are not wide enough  
for His winding-sheet.*

**E Thomson**

*Our Lord has written the promise of the  
Resurrection, not in books alone but in  
every leaf in springtime.*

**Martin Luther**

*Do not abandon yourselves to despair.  
We are the Easter people and hallelujah  
is our song.*

**Pope John Paul II**



## And the Simnel cake winner is...?

*Ticket no 446 and was bought by Juliet – your prize will be with you shortly. Many thanks to everyone who attended the first three Lent Lunches and took part in the raffle. The church is going to be greatly in need of funds so this will help.*

## OVER TO YOU

*Do you have a favourite hymn you could share with us, a photo, something about how you are dealing with the current crisis or what you would like to see in In Touch. I would love to hear from you so that we can share new around the benefice.*

*Please send anything to me at [fkwheatley@gmail.com](mailto:fkwheatley@gmail.com).*

