

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.

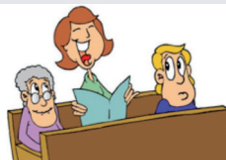
Welcome again to our latest way to stay In Touch with each other across the parishes. Hopefully, many of you know that we are also doing Zoom morning prayer Tuesday to Friday each week plus Sunday services. On Easter Sunday we had 74 of us online together plus several others listening in, so a healthy congregation of about 80. It's easy to join just email Fiona for the way in.

Meanwhile life goes strangely forward for most of us as we adapt to new ways of being. There's a lot of home baking going on as flour and yeast have become hard to find, pasta still seems absent, but loo rolls are back whilst chocolate never went away—HOORAY.

In Belarus the advice is to drink more vodka, sauna frequently and stay on your tractor, all fine if you have a tractor of course: but if not HMG advice to stay at home and keep your distance from others is the way for us to help. However, don't stop there, my daughter lives in Canary Wharf and tells me that every evening someone sings opera from a high window, clearly picking up on Italian habits, surely some of you could do that? People are joining in with evening exercise classes in the road outside their homes, how about that? Marathons are being run on balconies to raise money. Online quiz participation has almost become obligatory and the general care of those in need and who are vulnerable has reached stunning new heights of love and imagination.

Don't lose heart in these times, they will pass and before long some form of normality will be here again. Let's hope the new normal holds on to lots of these wonderful things that we are experiencing. Meanwhile enjoy the boundless beauty of Spring, keep safe and well and look for ways to be the best you that's possible. Peace and blessings to all. **Nick**

St James the Least of All On why pews are better than chairs *The Rectory*



My dear Nephew Darren

While it was good to see you when you visited us last Sunday, your suggestion to our churchwardens that chairs would be far more comfortable than our pews was not well received. You must remember that significant numbers in any congregation firmly believe that the more uncomfortable they are, the holier they must be. Pews, generally designed several centuries ago when legs were shorter and bottoms smaller, are conducive neither to comfort nor sleep - although Colonel Marchington achieves the latter unerringly every Sunday within minutes of arrival.

At least with pews, parishioners can make some pretence at kneeling, adopting that peculiar crouch only ever seen in church life. Attempt that with chairs and you are assured of sending the one in front sliding across the floor with a shriek. Chairs may be all very well in your own church, so you can create space for the delights of liturgical dance and baby clinics, but we prefer something more immovable. Little Miss Thripp has, over the years, created something of a nest where she sits, quietly bringing in cushions, travelling rugs and her own supply of books and peppermints. As for Major Hoare, I suspect he is installing a drinks cabinet in his pew.

Pews, unlike rows of chairs, also create territorial behaviour. If a visitor should sit in a pew where regulars have sat for the last 50 years, it is regarded as if it were the invasion of Poland. One innocent family once chose the pew where generations of the Psmith family have sat since dinosaurs roamed the land. The Psmiths had no intention of ceding territory peacefully and so for the whole of Matins, one pew which should have held 6 people sat 9. When they stood to sing, the line exploded into the aisles on both sides, returning to their compressed state, necessitating staggered shallow breathing, when re-seated.

I will concede, however, that we made one mistake some years ago when the pews were re-varnished without having been fully cleaned first. The result is that every time the congregation stands, the organ is drowned out by the sound of tearing, while coats and jackets reluctantly part company with wood.

No, your congregation may relax in the luxury of padded chairs, but we will stoutly maintain our holy discomfort. *Your loving uncle, Eustace*

Easter Morning - Thank you for the music!

A huge thank you to Michael Attwood and the Weston Choir for the music on Easter Sunday - it made the service really special to be able to sing along (all suitably muted) to the great Easter hymns. Huge thanks also to the Peter and Hannah Taylor for dealing with getting the music up on the screen for us and for the picture display of our lovely churches here in the benefice with the focus on spring flowers in the churchyards. Especial thanks to Hannah for leading the singing for Thine be the Glory - I could see loads of people singing along. It made Easter Morning feel so much more together even though we are all apart. You are all stars!





Titian: Noli Me Tangere (c.1515)

Once again, the Revd Canon Mike Leverton leads us through a famous painting from Easter.

Few paintings are as self-consciously beautiful as this. At one level it is simply a glorious love scene played out against the backdrop of a quiet hill town with the early morning light illuminating the clouds over distant purple hills, sheep safely grazing in the dell below. The human figures are graceful and attractive and their bond of affection is transparent.

But this is the morning of the Resurrection as told by John. Mary Magdalene, meeting the risen Christ, mistakes him for the gardener. Titian generously excuses her mistake by placing a hoe in Christ's left hand. Mary's own left hand rests on the jar of ointment with which she intended to anoint the dead body of her Lord. Her right hand reaches out to touch him but pauses with the wrist deflecting the hand upwards as Christ says 'Do not touch me (noli me tangere) because I have not yet ascended to my Father'.

Such an experience would throw anyone's mind into bewildered stupefaction. Mary's attempt to comprehend it is initially, on a physical level alone. Her red dress hints at carnality, and her supposed (though on no real evidence) previous life of 'ill repute', and the sensuality implicit in that jar of ointment backs up this impression. Mary's love for Jesus is both ardent and true, but, says Titian, it is physical.

Jesus sways gently out of reach, but the upper part of his body shapes over Mary as a protective curve. His shroud hangs between them as a veiled barrier. But the tender love of Christ is as real as Mary's love for him, expressed on an altogether different plane. Beginning with his pieced foot, reminding us of the cross, we can trace with our eye the line of his body up through the hill in the background to the town, the world of human life. His protecting love for Mary is the love of God for the world.

The curve begun in Mary's body is initially very shallow, as is her understanding of what is meant by this new experience of her Lord. But see how the line of her body continues through her head to the near vertical tree above. This ultimate 'steep learning curve' depicts Mary now perceiving the truth of the Resurrection, a truth we can all now see, that love's fulfilment is spiritual not physical; that 'The Lord who cannot be touched is a Lord who cannot be taken away' (Neil MacGregor). Mary's distress at the death of Jesus is transformed into resurrection joy. Christ is alive and now will never die.

A hymn

*to sing at home for the
2nd Sunday of Easter*

*Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord
and King adore;
Mortals give thanks and sing, and
triumph evermore;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!*

*Jesus, the Savior, reigns, the God of
truth and love;
When He had purged our stains He
took His seat above;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!*

*His kingdom cannot fail, He rules o'er
earth and Heav'n,
The keys of death and hell are to our
Jesus giv'n;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!*

*He sits at God's right hand till all His
foes submit,
And bow to His command, and fall
beneath His feet:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!*

*Rejoice in glorious hope! Jesus the
Judge shall come,
And take His servants up to their
eternal home.
We soon shall hear th'archangel's
voice;
The trump of God shall sound, rejoice!*

Refresh my heart in Spring ...

'Praise the name of the Lord your God, who had dealt wondrously with you' Joel 2:26

This is just a little song of praise for spring, Lord, and the wonders it works in us. The way it makes us want to rearrange things, clean and decorate – the house, the garden, ourselves!

It is as if your sunshine, spilling across the waking earth, spills through our spirits too. Why else should we feel this mad urge to paint the bathroom, clean out the car

or add masses of colourful flowers to our gardens?

Best of all, Lord, spring inspires us to do some neglected housecleaning and refurbishment of our spirits. Out with self-pity, old grudges and regrets. In with self-esteem...refreshing our own interiors with a new supply of forgiveness and understanding, of goals, delights and dreams. To scatter these like seeds in the soil within ourselves and literally feel them grow. Thank you, Lord, for the sunshine and all these ways to feel and celebrate spring. Marjorie Holmes