

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.



WHATS NEW? (and normal)

It's another expression to lay hold of – NEW NORMAL. I'm not sure I ever grasped some of the old ones or even knew what they were, is it just me? Of course I get it, what things have now become so part of our lives that henceforth they will be staying as both new, albeit imposed, and normal. Loving the NHS instead of moaning about it, that's a good NN. The cleaner than ever environment, that a good NN. Zoom to get us together even though we are tech idiots, that's a great NN. Captain Tom, 100 years old but definitely a good NN.

Bigger financial worries, bad NN for many. Job insecurity also bad, Anxiety and illness at new high levels are surely also unwanted. Not allowed to meet and hug those we love is a horrible NN. The power of bad is enormous in the way it affects us, we all get more shaken by losing £5 than finding £100, why is that? Clinical psychologists tell us that negative things in our lives can be four times more affecting than good things, unless we make a deliberate effort to rethink, so let's get on with rethinking.

As Christians we start each day by being thankful to God and asking forgiveness of the things we have negatively contributed to the lives of others and our own. In so doing we acknowledge the greatness and goodness of our Heavenly Father and also our own part in the world, these are NORMAL NORMALS.

God is surely the oldest NORMAL there is, but not for everyone. A new survey reveals that 33% of adults are praying about the crisis because they believe it makes a difference, and of course they are correct. 34% of 18-34 year olds have logged on to online worship, they are finding a wonderful NN.

Tell everyone you know they are welcome to Join us for the same adventure, we meet at 10am Tuesday to Friday for morning prayer. 10am every Sunday for a service and 6pm on alternate Wednesdays for BCP evening prayer. There's a lovely NN waiting for all who log in.

Blessings and virtual hugs to all. Nick

The Valley of Dry Bones has a future hope

'A dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones. An' I hear the word of the Lord!'

At this time of global pandemic, we live with stark reality of death and life. Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (37:1-14) was given when God's people were in exile in Babylon. They felt dead, being separated from home and God! The vision answers God's question: 'can these bones live?'

We can also feel cut off from God, facing the loss of job, business, home or health, with churches unable to meet on Sundays. This vision assures us that God has power over death and can breathe new life into what is hopeless.

When Ezekiel is told to 'prophesy to the bones,' God brings them back to life: the bones come together and are covered with muscles and skin. He then prophesies to the wind, from the four corners of the earth, to bring the bodies alive. The physical bodies are then filled with God's breath to bring new life. The miracle of this story is that God not only makes these bones live, but also brings the life of His Spirit.

The Covid-19 virus robs people of their life by suffocation, so that they can't breathe. Our hope beyond the pandemic is that the gift of God's Spirit will bring new life to our lives, churches and world. Life will certainly look very different in the future, but we can be assured that God is with us and that we are safe in His hands.

'I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.' (vs14)

ROTAS

HOW TO RECREATE THEM AT HOME DURING LOCKDOWN





Ernst Barlach: *The Reunion (1926)*



What does this wonderfully expressive wood carving suggest to you? Ernst Barlach, who created it, called it *Das Weidersehen*, 'The Reunion – Christ

and Thomas', but for those who see it in its home at the Ernst Barlach Haus in Hamburg it suggests a range of possibilities, husband and wife perhaps, or even mother and son. To me it seems the perfect image of the return home of the Prodigal Son, the penitent young man yearning for re-acceptance into his father's life.

But for our Easter reflections Christ and Thomas it is. Thomas' upward gaze at the resurrected Jesus is searching and inquisitive. Can it really be him? But this is not the cynical 'Doubting Thomas' who refuses to believe but a Thomas who stands at the beginning of his conversion to resurrected life, a Thomas who wants to believe and whose dawning sense of recognition enables new life to flood into him through the eyes of Christ. His stooping posture puts him in an attitude of humility so as to look up at the face of the man who now stands on the other side of death and who looks out with eyes of compassion which regard the whole world, not just Thomas.

They embrace, not fully, for Thomas is at the very moment when disbelief turns to faith. His grasping at Jesus' shoulder seems to be an attempt to

hold on, to prevent this vision and all it might mean for him withdrawing once more. But he is gently, lovingly held by Jesus, whose fingers are stretched wide as if further to suggest that the embrace is universal, not just for Thomas, but for us all. But we are not seized – Christ will always let us go if we wish to turn from him.

The values of compassion and forgiveness which *The Reunion* epitomises are central to the faith which dwells in us. But these values require us to nourish them, not to assume that they will always prevail because so obviously right and just. Ernst Barlach lived in Germany and did much of his best work between the wars. But he died in 1938 having seen his work seized by the Nazis and pitched into their exhibitions of 'Degenerate Art', *The Reunion* now labelled as 'Two monkeys in nightshirts'. When a society comes to privilege pitiless strength and national glory above all else, reflective compassion looks like a weakness to be eradicated. But the risen life of Christ calls us to faith and love renewed and the beautiful sensitivity of Barlach's work can inspire us all to that vision.

Blossom at Warrens Green



For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear upon the earth: the time of singing has come – Song of Solomon 2:11 & 12.

Bluebells at Shaws Green



A joyful heart is a normal result of a heart that is burning with love – Mother Theresa.



Our spiritual journeys are lived moment by moment, not day by day or even week by week – Leslie Williams.

Clematis at Flint Cottage

Peonies at the Cottams



To trust God completely requires the discipline of surrender! – Charles Swindoll.



Spring is God's way of celebrating, of telling the world how much He loves all of creation – Harriet Crosby.

Magnolia Stella at the Uttley's