

# Magazine

June/July 2020

Jonah – and us

Plants for sale

Moving on in isolation



Zion  
United  
Reformed  
Church

~ Northallerton ~

# Zion and Community

These are the weekly activities that would normally take place.

They will be reinstated as soon as possible

Sunday 10.00 a.m.	Morning worship Communion every 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday Bright and early and a warm welcome every week
Monday 9.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. In term time	Tiny time Mums, come and join us in the Church Hall for a chat and a cuppa while the children play
Wednesday 10.00 a.m. to 12 noon	'Way In' A chance to get a coffee or tea and a chat
12 noon to 12.30 p.m.	A chance to sit and eat your packed lunch warm and dry
1.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.	Market Day service A time for quiet reflection in the midst of a busy day
Saturday 10.00 a.m. to 12 noon	'Way In' More coffee and chat

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# Contents

<b>4</b>	<b>Pastoral letter</b>	Moving on in isolation
<b>6</b>	<b>After the clapping..</b>	... life goes on
<b>8</b>	<b>Thought for Ascension Day</b>	A lark ascending...
<b>10</b>	<b>Genius or madman</b>	Alexander Cruden
<b>12</b>	<b>Just an ordinary man</b>	Jonah – and us
<b>15</b>	<b>Church Diary</b>	Two cancellations
<b>15</b>	<b>Plant offer</b>	Help the Secret Garden
<b>17</b>	<b>Trust</b>	A hymn to sustain you
<b>18</b>	<b>Staying safe</b>	Face masks
<b>23</b>	<b>Elders' Duty Rota</b>	Who's available when
<b>24</b>	<b>Contact us</b>	Keeping in touch

## Pastoral letter

Dear Friends,

As I write we have had one week since the Prime Minister announced a limited relaxing of the lockdown in England and gave some idea of how it might be further relaxed in the months ahead. As I write we are still in the midst of controversy over the divisions his announcement has made in the approach across the UK, whether it sends out the wrong message or one so confusing that it will create a degree of chaos. As I write we are still wondering if this move has come too early and we are going to see a rise again in the numbers contracting the virus. All that said, for most of us, things haven't really changed, and we continue in our 'isolation'.

In this time between Holy Week and Pentecost our lectionary readings are about the disciples in a form of isolation. Readings from John's Gospel from Jesus' 'Farewell Discourses' are from that time just before Jesus' arrest. They are together in an upper room, cocooned from the world to share the Passover Meal, to share what turns out to be the last time of fellowship they will have together with Jesus before his death. The 'Resurrection Appearances' are equally in isolation.

The isolation of the burial ground in the early morning; of the upper room again behind locked doors; on the road into the country in the growing dusk; again at dawn, to fisherman in their boat on the lake after a fruitless night's fishing. Even the Pentecost story



itself begins in isolation, with fearful disciples hiding behind a locked door.

We can see isolation as a purely negative thing. Of course, it means we cannot do lots of things we so much enjoy, especially meeting others. For the time being we cannot meet together for worship or to enjoy the fellowship of the church in usual ways. Of course, we miss that and, in this sense, it is a negative thing. However, for the disciples it is in that isolation that they learn such an amazing truth (that 'he is alive!'); that they begin to make sense of their time following Jesus around the country and what they had heard and seen; that they are themselves changed from fearful and hopeless individuals into courageous and committed apostles.

One day, we will be able to resume worship together again in our church buildings. In the meantime, as for those disciples, even in isolation we can find our faith enriched, so that we 'return' with renewed vigour for our lives as disciples and witnesses in our various communities.

Take care, and continue to know God present with us all in our isolation.

Yours in his love,

*Stephen*

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*Receive who you are; Become what you receive*  
*St Augustine*

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## After the clapping

I just wanted to share with you some of what have been the unexpected joys for me of these last few weeks, as I ask myself what I can learn from having been dwelling on this new threshold, sitting in this liminal space not really knowing which way any of us will go from here, even for worship.

*'What will happen when the clapping has stopped?'*

We are anxious about our young families, the future of the economy, about the deadly unknown nature of this unpredictable virus. But you rarely hear anyone in the media speak of 'fear.' I have worried about that too for the children.



We live in a 'think positive' age, clap, bang saucepans and do jolly things. But all along I have wondered if the children are being given the 'opportunity' to express 'fear'. Then, last week I heard it from my eleven-year-old grandson, just tentatively whispering in the background of an overheard telephone call. His mother was talking to me about her front-line work in one of the main London hospitals. Then this little boy must have voiced his unspoken thoughts, and his mummy turned to him and emphatically said, "No. *Grandma and Grandad are **not** in a care home.*" The news was currently breaking about the new threat to residents and his other grandad had died only a few months ago.

And here is the prayer of another grandson, only five years old.

*"Dear God, please can you give people hugs when they are scared and welcome the people who are rising to Heaven to be with you. Amen"*

Thank you to the children for their honesty, their wisdom and for their daring to name it.

*Will we continue to listen to the children and the powerless, after the clapping has stopped?*

I have been out walking for most of every afternoon, where I have been blessed by being integrated into the changing glorious countryside in stunningly beautiful weather, both in farming process and the wild-life; the whole landscape transforming and evolving on a daily basis. Lane and hedgerow are bursting with wild floral abundance, bees buzzing and birds singing away in chorus. Blossom has hung heavy and fragrant.

We have a row of tall pointy hawthorn trees along our riverbank, all cascading from top to ground in white as if clothed as brides in dress and veil. I and my landlord caught our breath simultaneously at this shared image. Fresh from this experience I came in and picked up a set of three long emails about mind-boggling theology which finished with the most memorable sentence of it all for me. *'I have had a lovely day. Being fed up with every day in lockdown wearing my pyjamas or gardening clothes, today I have worn my wedding dress and sparkly sandals!'* Wow. What a joy!

*What will happen when the clapping stops?*

Over the last few weeks, I have found T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* speaking profoundly and spiritually into our current context. Ironically, I had chosen it at the beginning of the year for my local book-group discussion

this month. Hilary chose a passage from it coincidentally for our contemplative prayer group reflection this week. These words from this passage spoke to me in my fears that this virus just has to be a wake-up call!

From Little Gidding then...  
*A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything).*

It is hardly credible to believe that this virus, something so tiny, invisible to the naked eye, has brought the world to its knees.  
Has it?

*What will happen when the clapping stops?*

Eliot alerts us...  
*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we have started  
And know the place for the first time.*

*Ann Bowes*

## Thought for Ascension Day

*Vaughan Williams - The Lark Ascending*

Not written for Ascension but at least bearing the word in the title. Consistently one of the nation's favourite pieces of music, it was originally written in 1914 for violin and piano as a setting of 12 lines of George Meredith's poem:



*He rises and begins to round,  
He drops the silver chain of sound,  
Of many links without a break,  
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.  
For singing till his heaven fills,  
'Tis love of earth that he instils,  
And ever winging up and up,  
Our valley is his golden cup  
And he the wine which overflows  
to lift us with him as he goes.  
Till lost on his aerial rings  
In light, and then the fancy sings.*



It was not performed in either format until 1920, and has an elegiac, peaceful quality that suggests a homage to the horrors of WW1 despite the fact that it was written before. Larks are ground-nesting birds and, as such, were some of the few birds that were seen on the shattered battlefields.

Watch Nigel Kennedy, CBSO, Simon Rattle  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrVDwNt1Nz4>

*Hazel Sumsion*

*(This came from Graham Merrium in his weekly music letter for Sowerby Music and is printed with his permission)*

Wonder is the basis of worship -  
Thomas Carlyle 1795-1881

## Genius or Madman?

Many commentators since have called my hero 'mad' - and he was indeed cast into a lunatic asylum as a youth. 'The poor man is not in his right mind' (1755). 'Such decided symptoms of insanity appeared in his conduct as rendered confinement necessary' (1789). 'A mind in which reason tottered, if she were not entirely dethroned' (1836). 'Crazed by care, on the edge of that awful abyss' (1846). 'A man of weak intellect' (1850). 'His mind became unhinged' (1888). 'Confused and pious wretch...diseased mind' (1969). 'The perfect fool' (1987). 'Became insane' (1988). The question remains unanswered. Was it actually a ridiculous, mind-blowing, self-appointed task that created such a tortured intellect?

Picture the predicament of my obsessed, mid-eighteenth-century bookseller and proof-reader. His regular occupations were exhausting enough. But he felt driven by a divine mission. In a little room above pub lodgings. Often working by candlelight. Surrounded by lists and countless bits of paper. Alone, not part of a team. But buoyed by the sheer delight of the challenge. Until extraordinarily the first fruit of this monumental effort was ready to be presented personally to Queen Caroline on 3rd November 1737! This 'mad man' is Alexander Cruden.

The King James Authorised Version is 774,746 words long. Alexander Cruden's concordance is 2,370,000 words long. 'A means of propagating...the knowledge of God'. It has some similarities to a dictionary or an index. To a system of cross-referencing. But the scale is much greater and more detailed. Every word in the Bible had been

read and painstakingly contextualised. A project that would test a modern computer, yet carried out with pen and paper by one man.

Nothing simple about each entry. For 'Wine' we are given information about its origins and properties, before the 94 direct references and many sub-sets (wine bottles, wine press, wine bibber etc). 'Synagogue' merits a 4,000 word article on its history, layout, rules etc, before the 50 plus references.



The concordance is divided into three main alphabets - the longest that on the Holy Scriptures. A further idea of the complexity...there are 1019 headings just for the letter 'C', including 153 beginning 'Ca...'. Then a section on all the proper names therein. And one for the (by him despised) Apocrypha.

He had answered a call to fulfil the Will of God. His personal life was otherwise one of rebuffs and failures. Not surprisingly maybe, he remained a bachelor. But using skills learned in the newspaper printing office, in his zeal he pored again over every word on every page of the first concordance, improving the layout, typesetting and binding for a 2nd edition, presented this time to a young King George 3rd, to be rewarded with a royal £100. A further £500 from his publisher made him financially secure for the rest of his life. A 3rd edition followed in 1769, the year of his death on reaching the allotted three score years and ten. All the profits from future impressions were in trust to benefit his home-Town Council of Aberdeen.

The next 100 years saw 32 more editions, the 19th century 44 editions, the 20th century 20 editions. The shorter abridged version 500 pages, the longest over 1,000

pages. Never out of print. Not a bad legacy for a madman!

*Paul Bowes*

## Just an ordinary man

Of all the characters in the Bible I think that my favourite has to be Jonah. I know he's not real, the book being an allegory about the Jewish nation but whoever wrote that book had the human being off to a 'T'. Also, I suppose that at the moment we can relate to him being 'on his own' making his decisions, far reaching decisions they are too.

I know that you all know the story, but it won't hurt to look at it again. At the beginning we are at home with Jonah dying to set off an adventure for God, but God asked him to go somewhere that didn't suit Jonah's purpose. He was asked to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, Israel's deadly enemy.

Ring any bells yet? *"Yes God, what would you like me to do for you ... Oh, I didn't really want to do that. Can't you think of something else that I would like better?"* We do it all the time don't we? – put 'I' first instead of listening and at least trying to do what God is asking of us.

What's next – Jonah runs away and sets sail to try to escape from the Lord. He really should have known better than to think he could escape from God. We all know about the storm and being thrown overboard but I have to admit that Jonah really came good there. He

stood up for what he believed in and admitted he was at fault and eventually the sailors decided that they had to throw him overboard. The sea calmed immediately - and the sailors were so afraid that they promised to serve God.

Difficult one this – do we ever do something just because we are afraid of the consequences if we don't do it. In this case we may feel that the decision was the right one, but it could just as easily have been wrong. Fear is never a good reason for making a choice even though it is a perfectly understandable one.

And Jonah's choice – despite his fear, and he must have thought he was facing death, he made his decision; he had to admit liability and accept that it was the sea for him.



God reckoned he'd learned his lesson and sent the large fish to 'rescue' him. Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish is a beautiful description of a near death experience and being brought back from the brink of despair and then acceptance and hope and celebration. Sometimes it would seem that we have to go into the depths before we really come to terms with what is important in life and are prepared to follow God's path.

Again, God sent Jonah to Nineveh and this time he went. God so often gives us a second chance, accepting our human frailties, giving us the benefit of the doubt and hoping, no doubt, that we will do the same in our own lives.

So here we are in Nineveh with a transformed Jonah proclaiming that the population was so sinful that the city was to be destroyed by God in forty days. You have to give him credit for being a powerful preacher. They all,

including the King, believed him, amended their behaviour and did all the right things so that God would forgive them. And, of course, he did - much to Jonah's displeasure.

Now Jonah goes into a monumental sulk and moans at God. *"I knew you'd be soft on them; you always see the best in everyone and forgive them. Just let me die"* Can't you just see him stamping his foot and going off in a huff. Do we do that if we don't get what we think we should have from God? I suspect that sometimes we do. If things don't go well it's always good to stand back from them, allow a bit of time to pass and try to open your mind to God – he'll always send an answer – another way of doing things perhaps, a clearer understanding of what is needed.

And then there is the plant that shaded Jonah and afterwards was killed off by God. Another thing to be angry about *"What right have you to be angry about it?"* says God. *"I've every right"*, storms Jonah. *"No,"* says God, *"you haven't. It wasn't your plant you didn't nurture it and yet you are sorry for it"* - and he probably could have added 'sorry for yourself' as well – *"How much more should I have pity on all the people in Nineveh"*

We don't know what Jonah made of that as the book ends there but we can hope that, as he had done earlier, he reflected and accepted the rightness of God's argument.

But fancy having the temerity to argue with God in the first place. Who on earth would be foolish enough to do that? I hesitate to suggest it, but it wouldn't be you would it? I know that I'm guilty as charged and just hope that God with his infinite capacity to accept the faults and foibles of the human race will treat me just as he treated Jonah with great compassion and patience – we

all need that.

So, there we have it the story of Jonah the ordinary human being with all the failings that go with that condition and yet God obviously loved him and cared for him as he does and will always continue to do for us. Thanks be to God.

*Sue Kennedy*

## Church Diary

Sorry, there still are no dates to put here in fact just the opposite. I regret to announce that the Quiet Day on July 21<sup>st</sup> and the Awayday in Thirsk later in the year have had to be cancelled - for the time being anyway.

## Plant offer

I have had a patio full of cuttings from shrubs and herbaceous perennials for sale at the Secret Garden open days this summer. Sadly these fund-raising and awareness raising events are not going to happen this year! So, I thought I would just offer them to our lovely church family and Secret Garden volunteers as a start. They are free, but obviously any donations would be gratefully received. The plants will be on the plant stall. There are several ways you can get them:

- You can view what is on offer whilst Dave and I are there on a Monday or Thursday (ring me on 07902348850 to check what times as this may vary).
- If you are a key holder, just take what you want and leave any donations in the shed.
- If you know what you would like but are unable to come down, let me know and I will deliver them to you.



**Plants - Apart from the roses, all other plants are still juveniles!**

- 2x "Hazel's" climbing Rose – pink, beautifully scented. Original donated by Hazel
- Small Philadelphus bush (approx. 2-3ft) – Mock Orange, scented white flowers, deciduous
- Variegated pink-flowered weigela deciduous shrub (approx. 5ft)
- Small weigela shrub (approx. 1-2ft) deciduous dark brown leaves and deep red flowers
- Penstemon (perennial flower) several, either pink, burgundy or blue
- Fuschia, hardy, yellow leaves red flowers
- Variegated hosta
- Hebe, purple flowers approx. 3ft
- Hellebore dark chocolate coloured flowers
- Rosemary
- English lavender
- Purple loosestrife hardy perennial 3ft tall
- Flowering currant large deciduous shrub, red flowers in spring
- Red currant bush
- Euphorbia either silver or gold variegated leaves



- *Centaurea cyanis* (blue cornflower) perennial flowers on spring
- *Helenium sahinis* early flowering –tall 3ft orange daisy type flowers
- Bronze grass
- *Verbena bonariensis* tall, “wafy” purple flowering perennial in late summer
- *Cotoneaster horizontalis* herringbone red berries in autumn/ winter
- Several other things I can’t remember off hand!

*Liz Styan*

## Trust

I'd like to share with you all this hymn that I find very soul sustaining.

Put thou thy trust in God,  
 So safe shalt thou go on;  
 Walk in his strength with faith and hope,  
 So shall thy work be done.  
 Give to the winds thy fears;  
 Hope, and be undismayed;  
 God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears,  
 God shall lift up thy head.

Through waves, and clouds, and storms,  
 He gently clears the way;  
 Wait thou his time; so shall this night  
 Soon end in joyous day.  
 Leave to his sovereign sway  
 To choose and to command;

So shalt though wondering own, his way  
How wise, how strong his hand.

Thou seest our weakness, Lord;  
Our hearts are known to thee:  
O lift thou up the sinking hand,  
Confirm the feeble knee.  
Let us, in life, in death,  
Thy steadfast truth declare,  
And publish, with our latest breath,  
Thy love and guardian care{  
{Paul Gerhardt (1607-76), translated John Wesley  
(1703-91) Rejoice and Sing 550}

*Malcolm Smith*

## Staying safe

As we are now likely to be required to wear facemasks we thought it sensible to remind you that I have a pattern for making a re-usable face mask - better than nothing but not fool proof. It is predominantly for protecting others from whatever you have rather than vice versa, although there will be some benefit there too. They should be changed once soiled or moist. Don't touch the front of it once it is used and wash your hands.

You could also try watching this You Tube video  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz0YpY6VqVU>

*Liz Styan*

# Elders' duty rota

If you have any problems and would like to speak with someone please contact the Ministers, Secretary your designated Elder or the Duty Elder as given below

## Week beginning

### June

7<sup>th</sup> Jane Haslam

14<sup>th</sup> Jo Kennedy

21<sup>st</sup> Judith Puttock

28<sup>th</sup> Christine Roddam

### July

5<sup>th</sup> Liz Styan

12<sup>th</sup> Paul Bowes

19<sup>th</sup> Sue Bush

26<sup>th</sup> Jane Haslam



## Contact us



<b>Ministers:</b>	Rev Hilary Collinson and Rev Stephen Collinson	01748 821586
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<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.tsurc.org/">www.tsurc.org/</a>	



We hope you have enjoyed the magazine and when we are able to open again, we invite you to worship with us at High Street, Northallerton at our 10 a.m. Sunday service.

**Please note that the closing date for items for the August/September issue is 17<sup>th</sup> July**