



JUNE and JULY 2020

Minister's 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 is present with us all in our isolation.

Yours in his love,

Stephen

Please Note - No Church Services are scheduled due to lockdown restrictions - please check the website for latest updates

No 'News from the Pews' since the last service taken by Revd Alan Coustick on 15th March. We have missed the special services of Easter and Smarber when our friends from Holy Trinity usually join us but Stephen has emailed us with a service each week the church has been closed.

In difficult times as now, and during the floods we have had over the past year, it is amazing how the community works together to make sure all residents are safe and cared for. Everyone is grateful for those who have shopped, cooked, baked, collected and delivered so that vulnerable people can stay in their own homes.

When the first conditions were lifted it was alarming how many cars and motor bikes suddenly appeared on the roads and tents and a camper van thought they would stay overnight at beauty spots like Surrender Bridge and Barras End. We look forward to welcoming visitors back to the area but only when things are back to normal.

Hopefully it will not be too long before churches are allowed to open for services again – at least our congregation should be able to easily observe the social distancing rules!!

Sue Alderson

News from Afar

Ann and Edward Brown were pleased to receive an email from Julie Martin in Saltburn last week enquiring how we are coping in these strange times and as well as telling us that she, Pete and the family are all well she shared the following with us:

" Emanuel church here has been doing a lot during lockdown using Zoom and the church website. There is a rota of us who write talks or meditations to go on the website, and for the one I have just done I was allocated Psalm 121 vv.1-2. When thinking about lifting our eyes to the hills I was taken back to my time as minister in Swaledale, so I included reference to this. Since then I have had a very interesting email conversation with one of the retired vicars who had stayed at the Youth Hostel at Keld with his sons and has really good memories of Swaledale from those visits"

Julie concluded by sending her best wishes to our congregations in Swaledale and saying that as she wrote she was sitting in the sun on the bench which the churches bought on her retirement from the Low Row, Keld and Barnard Castle pastorate.

Daphne and Peter also had warm greeting from Peter and Sarah Venus on Lewis to say they're fine and the virus has not reached them yet. Peter is no longer looking after a Care Home but is working in the local hospital. Sarah's Clothes Shop has had to close, which is sad for her.

Keld News

The past few weeks have been very quiet for Keld residents, a most unusual occurrence but things do change eventually. As soon as people were allowed to travel out for a day visitors returned in their numbers. On the whole all are welcome but not when a group leaves three bags of rubbish for locals to collect. As this newsletter goes to print one funeral has already been held,

that of Ronnie Calvert, and another is due, that of Eleanor Alderson and our sympathy is extended to their relatives. It is strange not being able to attend a service and support the family in their grief and we look forward to the time our churches will be open again for services.

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Tees & Swale Pastorate