

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

Well here we are with our second In touch and as I write I am reminded of the story of David and Goliath. Fear of Goliath had the whole army of Israel rooted to the ground – no one person wanted to go up against the fearsome giant of the Philistines. It took David, small and seemingly unarmed to face him. We can be like David – each of us has a skill or talent that can be used to create community and hope in these times. It may be prayer, that most blessed of skills, it maybe making others smile, or making sure we contact someone each day to see that they are okay, smiling and waving from a safe distance as we take our daily walk, or just by keeping to the rules. Like David, our skills all combined together will defeat the giant we face at the moment.

What's going on?

Right now that's a question we are all asking as we find ourselves living in the most unexpected and extraordinary times. It's hard to plan when the situation changes on a daily basis and the unknown is for many the greatest fear, but let's look at what we do know. Sadly, there is bad behaviour doing the rounds, panic shopping that prevents sensible sharing, daft conversations about toilet tissue!!

This morning's news even included an item about food being stolen from schools and still scenes of packed trains, just how ridiculous can some people be? Then there's the other side as we see and know of immense acts of kindness and generosity, people looking after each other and also complete strangers. Imaginative actions to feed and entertain those who are on their own. Italians are singing out of their windows and Welsh singers are serenading old people's homes.

The good news of peoples love and wonderfulness will eclipse the selfish ones and hopefully change their hearts. Where is God in all this? He is where He always is, there to listen and hear us when we turn to Him. We are asked to be responsible carers of creation and it shouldn't be a big surprise when things go wrong as we reflect on how the world is abused by we who live here. We all have much to think about, our churches remain open for private prayer and reflection, please use them and look out for the prayer trees. We are all asked to light a candle in our windows every Sunday at 7PM as an act of solidarity and as a sign of light in the world in dark times. Keep safe, be kind and this too shall pass. **Nick**



*Buried under the biggest
burden is a good place
to find an even bigger
blessing
(Jeanette Oke)*

Refresh my heart in Spring

Barbara Johnson

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you (John 14:27)

Recently I spoke at the Raisin Festival in Dinuba, California, the Raisin Capital of the World. I learned a lot about raisins there and watched how they turn grapes into raisins that are juicy and sweet... First, they take only the best California grapes. Then they give the 'spa treatment': the grapes are bathed in hot water followed by twenty-four hours of controlled dehydration in warm air. Finally, the raisins are cooled and gently washed again in warm water before being bundled in convenient packages. The process entails great care heating the initial hot-water bath, gradually cooling the water, then heating it again to insure plump, moist raisins. I don't know about you, but I sure don't want to end up an old pious prune! Nor to I want to end up like one of those hard little crusty raisins I sometimes find at the bottom of a box. I'll gladly take the hot water God put me in because I know he knows I need it. Sometimes a good soaking brings out the stuff I didn't know I had in me, like courage, dignity and compassion.

For now the church building is closed to the public

The worship of God can continue in our hearts and homes. Ministers will continue to maintain a praying and worshipping presence from theirs.

Our care for each other also continues, for now outside the Church building.

For information how to join in with the Sunday worship from your home, please check the www.rushdenhertfordshire.com website and we will post details as soon as we have them.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength... Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these"

To protect the vulnerable among us, please do not leave your home except for essential trips.

Diocese of St Albans



God in the Arts

Editor: *The Revd. Michael Burgess continues his series on animals and birds as seen in art and Scripture... this will run throughout 2020.*

*'He gave us eyes to see them'
Murillo's 'St John the Baptist
with the Lamb'*

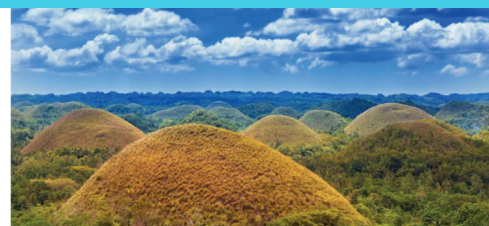
The nursery rhymes we learnt as children often focused on lambs: Mary had a little lamb, Baa baa black sheep, Little Bo-Peep and Little Boy Blue. They come to mind in springtime when we see lambs in the field jumping for joy or bleating as they run to the ewes for warmth and safety.

Murillo, a 17th century artist from Seville, had that world of childhood in mind when he painted 'St John the Baptist with the Lamb.' He looks back to the little child of Isaiah 11 leading the animals, but also we are called to think of the adult John the Baptist, who sees Jesus walking by and exclaims, "Look, here is the Lamb of God." In the painting, St John is a child with his arms around the lamb. He stands on rocky ground with a reed cross at his feet that has the words 'Behold the Lamb of God' on the ribbon.

The painting hangs in the National Gallery, and it certainly lacks the strength and brilliance of other Spanish artists. But Murillo is telling us how the drama of salvation is played out by children and lambs. He is inviting us to look from that world of childhood to another part of Isaiah's prophecy, where he talks of the Messiah led like a lamb to the slaughter. We enter that drama of salvation in Holy Week this month. On Good Friday Jesus was led to His crucifixion, just as the lambs were being killed for the Passover.

We think of the world of Old Testament sacrifice, where the high priest on the day of Atonement would enter the Holy of Holies and sacrifice a ram. And we focus on Jesus who is for us both priest and sacrifice, and realise that there is a divine chemistry at work that leads us from Good Friday to Easter Day.

The writer of Hebrews meditates on this theme and proclaims that in Jesus we have a high priest of the good things that have come - eternal redemption. We are invited to appropriate that great gift for ourselves in this Holy Week of our salvation. So, we journey from the childhood days of Murillo's painting to Calvary and the Easter garden. And we can also journey beyond to the heavenly city, where Revelation tells us that all the nations walk by the light of that Lamb - the Lamb of God.



This Psalm reminds us that the Lord is always with us, the more we focus on him then the more access we have to his grace, compassion and strength.

Psalm 121

Refrain: The Lord shall keep you from all evil.

*I lift up my eyes to the hills;
from where is my help to come?*

*My help comes from the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.*

*He will not suffer your foot to stumble;
he who watches over you will not sleep.*

*Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel
shall neither slumber nor sleep. R*

*The Lord himself watches over you;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,*

*So that the sun shall not strike you by day,
neither the moon by night.*

*The Lord shall keep you from all evil;
it is he who shall keep your soul.*

*The Lord shall keep watch over your going
out
and your coming in,
from this time forth for evermore.*

Refrain: The Lord shall keep you from all evil.

*Lord, ever watchful and faithful,
we look to you to be our defence
and we lift our hearts to know your help;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*



...er...the good news is the youth-group have made a great start by pressure washing the west window...

Churchyard tidy

The Churchwardens ask kindly should anyone who goes for a walk in the churchyard, if they would like to, pick up some of the stray branches etc and please put them on the pile ready for the bonfire when we are able to gather again.

Thank you