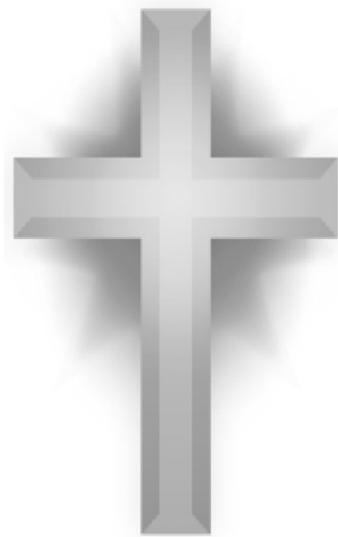
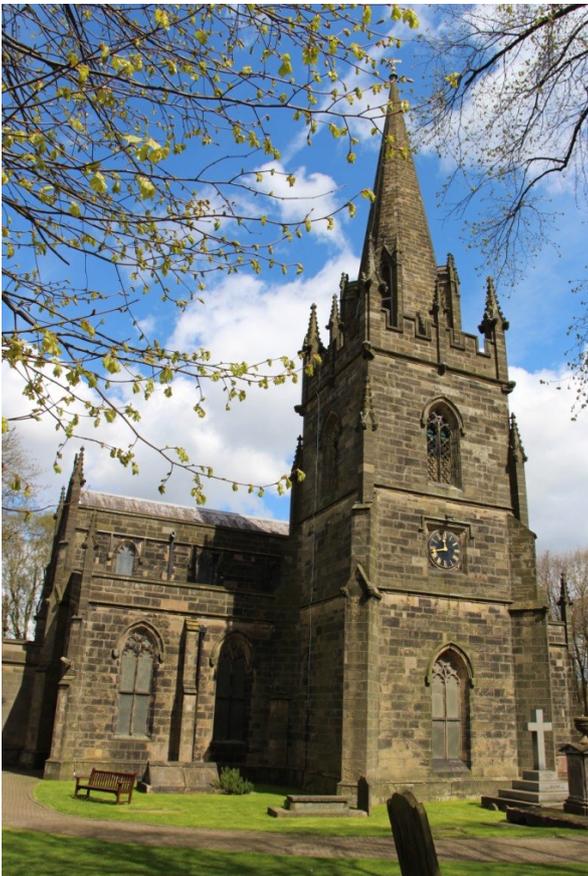


THE BEACON

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF ALL SAINTS, SEDGLEY
ST. ANDREW'S THE STRAITS & ST. PETERS UPPER GORNAL

Registered Charity Number 1179471



Kingdom People
love • compassion • justice • freedom

50p

September 2020

PARISH WIDE WHO'S WHO

Team Rector	Revd Guy Hewlett	01902 295164
Team Vicar	Rev Catherine Mitchell	01902 677897
Licensed Lay Minister	Canon Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Ordinand and ALM	Claire Cox	07812 010108
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Barbara Baker	01902 882847
Pastoral Care	Tracey Bate	01902 880727
	Jackie Hewlett	01902 295164
	Sarah Parker	01902 885570
Worship Leader	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
Youth Leader and Youth Group	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
Singing Angels	Claire Cox	07812 010108
PCC Secretary	Kath Apperley	01902 663253
PCC Treasurer	Sheila Moss	01902 893570
Parish Office	Gail Griffiths	01902 540289
Web Editor	Martin Jones	01902 884461

St Peters

Parish Warden	David Moss	01902 893570
Parish Warden	Edward Grist	01902 682786
Treasurer	Sheila Moss	01902 893570
Children's Advocate	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
DCC Secretary	John Powell	
Uniformed Organisations	Please Contact David Moss	01902 893570

St Andrew's

Warden	Paul Cox	
Children's Advocate	Carol Haynes	
Treasurer	Alan Turner	01902 670938
DCC Secretary	Rosemary Reed	01902 679007
Little Angels Baby & Toddler Group	Canon Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Singing Angels	Claire Cox	07812 010108

All Saints Who's Who

Vestry Clerk	Chris Williams	01902 672880
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	John Anderson	01902 677666
Treasurer	John Anderson	01902 677666
DCC Secretary	John Anderson	01902 677666
Caretaker	Pam Pugh	07860 256535
Junior Church	Barbara Price	01902 676591
Bell Ringer	Keith Williams	01902 672585
Organist	Martin Platts	07941 173252
Youth Leader	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
Brownies	Heather Churm	01902 674709
Ladies' Society	Geraldine Baker	01902 674608
Men's Society	Roger Berry	01902 881374
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Server/Verger	Len Millard	01902 676339
	Steve Castle	07971 899072
Noah's Ark		
Parent &		
Toddler Group	Linda Edwards	01902 672556

Funerals

July

3rd Elsie Pauline Litchfield - Beacon Hill
9th Brian Stearn - Sandwell Valley
27th Brenda Mary Baker - Gornal Wood
Bernard Tordoff - Gornal Wood
28th - Betty Geddes - Beacon Hill
30th - Leslie Butler - Gornal Wood

August

12th - Sheila Oliver - All Saints
19th - Charlotte Madondo - All Saints
20th - Margaret Christine Moss - St Peters

High Days & Holy Days for September

- 1st Sept Drithelm - vision of the afterlife
- 1st Sept St Giles of Provence - helping those damaged by life
- 2nd Sept The New Guinea Martyrs of 1942
- 2nd Sept St William of Roskilde - standing up for social justice
- 3rd Sept St Gregory the Great - man who saved the 'angels'
- NEW 4th Sept St Birinus – apostle of Wessex
- 5th Sept Laurence Giustiniani - the saint who knew how to help a beggar
- 6th Sept Allen Gardiner – founder of the South American Missionary Society
- 8th Sept The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 9th Sept St Peter Claver - compassion for slaves
- 11th Sept St Protus and St Hyacinth - victims of mindless violence
- 11th Sept St Deiniol of Bangor - bringing disagreeing bishops together
- 13th Sept St John Chrysostom - living a public faith
- 14th Sept Holy Cross Day
- 15th Sept St Adam of Caithness - the way NOT to tithe
- 16th Sept Ninian, Bishop of Galloway – Apostle of the Picts (Scotland)
- 16th Sept Cornelius – the saint who had mercy on sinning Christians
- 18th Sept St Joseph of Copertino - the awkward saint
- 20th Sept The Martyrs of Korea
- 21st Sept St Matthew
- 23rd Sept When the sun goes edgewise – and daytime equals night
- 24th Sept St Gerard Sagredo – church planting in the 11th century
- 25th Sept St Ceolfrith - baking and Bibles
- 27th Sept Vincent de Paul – devotion to the poor and oppressed
- 28th Sept St Lioba - a memorable woman
- 29th Sept Michael and All Angels
- 29th Sept Angels Unawares
- 29th Sept Enter all the angels, led by Michael

THE BEACON

If you are interested in having the magazine delivered to your home on a regular basis please contact:

Karen Evans: 01902 678056

The Beacon is published ten times a year and the cost for the year is £5. A larger typeface version of The Beacon can be provided on request.

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admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

by

Friday 25th September

and needs to be in Arial typeface, size 18.

Do not send files in pdf format

WEBSITE: **www.gornalandsedgley.org.uk**

To Magazine Deliverers

Could you please get email addresses for all the people that you deliver to and please and let either Gail Griffiths or Karen Evans know .

St Peter's District Church magazine

St Peter's also publishes a magazine which is more particular to Upper Gornal. If you would like to receive that magazine (which is not available electronically), in the first instance please contact a St Peter's Church warden details on page 2 of this magazine.

You will have seen in the Press that all our churches are closed for services for the foreseeable future. This means there will be no Vestry Hour at All Saints' to deal with wedding and baptism enquiries. We are having to re-arrange those weddings and baptisms disrupted by the current situation so, regretfully, cannot consider any enquiries for baptisms until further notice, nor can we consider any requests for weddings for 2020.

If you wish to enquire about a wedding for 2021 or 2022, please contact

Chris Williams chriswilliams550@btinternet.com.

Join us for more **Open Conversations** in **September**

At the start of the year we held the first round of our 'Open Conversations'. A fantastic 95% of parishes were represented at them and I'm hugely grateful to all those who took part. We are planning a further set of conversations in September and I hope they will be just as well attended.

Since those first conversations, the pandemic has changed the world in ways that would have been inconceivable six months ago. That makes these new conversations all the more important as we seek together to discern God's will for the future in challenging times.

Conversation is an essential part of the Christian life. It's no accident that the word 'conversion' is related to the word 'conversation'. To converse is to be connected. The conversation continues as we continually turn towards the person with whom we're speaking. The word conversion literally means 'to keep turning' to God in conversation.

God comes to us individually and corporately. As we turn to one another in conversation to share our insights, we turn to God for conversion. Only together can we discern his will for us.

Jesus came to proclaim the Kingdom of God and in this diocese we are clear that we are called to be Kingdom People of love, compassion, justice and freedom. And to grow as Kingdom People, we need to have churches across the Diocese which are healthy and sustainable.

These conversations will enable us to explore what a healthy and sustainable church might look like in our own context – regardless of the size of our congregation or whether our church is urban, rural or something in between. This is a chance to reflect on what our future might hold as we seek to worship God, make new disciples, share hope and transform our communities.

The meetings will be held online using Zoom, but will follow a similar format to the previous open conversations, with opportunities for people to contribute in small groups. There will also be other opportunities to engage for those unable to use Zoom – you can find out more at www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/open-conversations.

Please do take part if you can. May we converse well and, as we do so, be continually converted!

Bishop John

All Saints goes contactless

The precautions associated with Covid has seen a significant reduction in the use of cash in favour of contactless payment.

All Saints' is enabling contactless giving and if you would like to contribute to the work of All Saints there are now 6 methods:

- 1 By use of the contactless terminal in church.
- 2 By QR code. Please use the camera on your phone to scan the QR code, open things, and make a donation. If you pay tax please Gift Aid.
- 3 By accessing online giving on the Parish website
- 4 Through the Parish Giving scheme
- 5 By Standing Order
- 6 By BACS



If you require any assistance please speak to **John Anderson**.

From Guy Hewlett – Hope when all seems lost!

It has been a long time since the 23rd of March 2020 – the start of the lockdown. A long journey through uncharted times. We have all had to deal with this huge challenge. As a parish and as individuals we have seen changes to our lives often happening by the hour let alone daily, weekly or monthly. For many there has been a very great concern about health and about our future; concern as individuals and families, as a church community and as a wider community.

In times of uncertainty we often find ourselves reprioritising what is important. Many of us have found and rediscovered the things that we most value in our lives. I am sure for all of us the importance of family and friends has been hugely emphasised. Love is central.

When we have times of trouble we are in danger of defaulting back to a place of familiarity where we seek stability and certainty. This is very natural and understandable. I say in danger because there is the real challenge of not seeing the new opportunities that are possible in dramatic and difficult times.

After Jesus' crucifixion his disciples were understandably in disarray following very dramatic and difficult times. There is that wonderful reading in John's Gospel in chapter 21 when the disciples go back to fishing. They have gone back to what was familiar before they had met Jesus. Even though they had lived with him, walked with him, eaten with him, laughed and cried with him they missed the fact that he was not dead and that the resurrection had truly taken place.

He had already shown himself to others, but they were truly struggling to believe. So, they went back to what they always used to do; they went fishing. On that wonderful day by the sea of Tiberius Jesus showed himself to the disciples, including John and Simon Peter.

The scripture tells us that just after daybreak Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Often if we are not looking for something or someone, we just do not see them in front of us.

Jesus said to them, 'children, you have no fish, have you?' The answer of course despite this being their profession was no! He told them to cast the net to the right side of the boat. So, they cast it, and now they were not able to pull the net in because there were so many fish.

John the disciple said, 'it is the Lord' and when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord he put on some clothes because he was naked and jumped into the lake. When John identified Jesus, Simon saw him! The other disciples came in on the boat dragging the full net of fish because they were not far from the land only about 100 yards off.

There on the beach was Jesus cooking fish on a charcoal fire, with bread. I always think this sounds like a truly tasty breakfast! They brought some of the fish to Jesus at his request and then suddenly they all realised who it was.

I am sure they could not believe it was Jesus when they first saw him because they had been through such a very, very, difficult time and just did not look out for him. Their hopes had been dashed. They could not understand that good could come from such the very difficult circumstance they had been through.

We would never want such a terrible time as we have all been through.

There is a scripture which says that all things work for the good of those who believe and are called according to God's purposes.

I hope and pray as we come to the autumn of this year our hearts will be filled with hope despite the challenges which still face us.

I pray that we will keep our eyes open for Jesus and that we will see him working for our good in the midst of our difficulties.

I pray we will be able to encourage each other and say 'It is the Lord!'

The challenges we face are immense as we deal with what is called the 'new normal' because of the COVID-19 disease. But I believe that Jesus is with us in the middle of all that has happened. God is in the mess with us and he is God of this mess.

In Johns Gospel chapter 14 Jesus says to his disciples, as he is preparing them to understand he was going to the Father ahead of them: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid".

Hear him speak to you with the same words. Know that God is with you today and every day. Let's allow our faith to burn bright with the hope and love of God in Christ Jesus; and let's step out into the rest of this year and into next year with our hearts filled with hope.

Let's open our eyes and see the Lord!



A Grandchild is born

Pam and Stan Hunt are delighted to announce during the lockdown we have welcomed the birth of our first great grandchild, a very small but perfect girl, who although things were difficult is now thriving and giving our family much joy.

Mothers' Union

This year has been far from normal and we have been unable to meet as a branch since March. We have kept in touch through phone calls and it has been good to see many of you face-to-face when Chris and I have delivered the MU Newsletters. From the conversations I have had, the feelings about meeting this Autumn are mixed. Many feel that it is too early to meet and would prefer to wait until 2021, others would like to meet before the end of the year. We are therefore proposing to meet, those who wish to, on Tuesday 6th October, 2.30pm, in All Saints' Church Hall and Revd Guy has offered to celebrate communion for us.

This meeting will only take place if it is safe to do so at the time.

Due to social distancing we are only allowed to have 14 people seated in the hall so you will need to book a place for the meeting by ringing me the week before.

I have cancelled the Christmas meal we were due to have at The Lodge.

I have been in touch with Karen at the Refuge to see if there are any items they need, which we could provide for them in the months leading up to Christmas. They would be grateful for children's colouring books, dot-to-dot books, felt pens and adult quiz books and colouring books. If you are able to help with this appeal, I am happy to collect the items, and I will get them to Karen.

As I write this, life is relaxing a little. Some people have returned to doing their own shopping, others have been out for a meal and some have ventured on holiday, others are still uncertain and anxious. We cannot always understand our feelings and how they can change from day to day. Why have I no problem going to the hairdressers but still not sure about some other things? One step at a time seems good advice, and to remember that everyone's steps are different.

Take care and God Bless

Liz Williams

Friday 2nd October

We are holding a 'Zoom' Coffee Morning at 10.00am

Invitation will be sent by email for those on the News groups. Those of you unable to join in by Zoom can join us in spirit, having your coffee and cake at home at the same time. I am happy to receive all donations for this worthy cause which you can deliver to me or I can collect.

If you wish to Gift Aid your donation please mark on your envelope.

Many thanks Liz Williams

Are politicians the oldest profession?

A surgeon, an architect and a politician were arguing as to whose profession was the oldest. Said the surgeon: "Eve was made from Adam's rib, and that surely was a surgical operation."

"Maybe," admitted the architect, "but prior to that, order was created out of chaos, and that was an architectural job."

"But," the politician pointed out in triumph, "somebody had to have created the chaos in the first place!"

A tribute to Sheila Oliver

A tribute to Sheila Oliver from her husband Michael shared at her funeral in All Saints on Wednesday 12th August 2020. May Sheila rest in peace and rise in Glory:

Sheila,

Sheila was born on 24th May 1945 in Wolverhampton to Richard and Dorothy James. Following the birth of her brother Michael in 1949 the family moved to 173 Tipton Road, Woodsetton when Sheila was 4 years old.

Her life in Sedgley commenced when she went to Queen Victoria infants' school where she began to forge friendships some of which have lasted a lifetime. From Queen Victoria school she moved to Dormston School at the age of 11 yrs but was selected to go to Dudley Girls High school aged 13. The ethos of this school sustained her throughout her life and fostered her interests in literature, history, music and singing. Sheila looked back on her time there with affection and pride.

Unfortunately, the death of her father in 1961, when she was aged 15, adversely affected her ambitions and following her GCE 'O' levels she moved to secretarial college and subsequently the world of work. Her first job involved travel by bus and train to Birmingham, but the journey was just too time consuming and she found alternative employment in Wolverhampton with a private company, and finally the Ministry of Pensions.

Sheila's long association with All Saints Church began during her early teenage years. In the late 1950's she was a member of the Church youth club where on Friday evenings the youngsters played and danced to pop records in the church hall. Sheila's favourite pop singer was Cliff Richard and she was a lifelong fan and attended a number of Cliff concerts with husband Michael over the years.

She had a very eclectic interest in music both for listening to and singing. This included pop classics, country music and choral works by Handel, Vivaldi, Gabriel Faure, John Stainer and John Rutter

Her desire to travel, which she retained throughout her life, was initially satisfied with the youth club with annual trips arranged to Blackpool and early in the 1960's to the continent, including Ostend and a memorable journey by train across France and Switzerland to Finale Liguria on the Italian Riviera in 1963.

At the youth club's 1963 New Year's Eve dance Sheila was busy selling raffle tickets and Michael always contended that the one she sold to him won him First Prize.

During 1964 Sheila was rehearsing and performing in a youth club drama group production of A Midsummer Night's Dream with future husband Michael very much in the wings. However, he eventually plucked up the courage to ask her out and during the next few months love blossomed and Sheila and Michael were married in All Saints Church on the 2nd July 1966.

Throughout her married life Sheila's mom was always at the forefront of her mind and Sheila continued to care for her until her mom's death in 2012 aged 98yrs.

Sheila and Michael's first child, a daughter Jayne Elizabeth was born on 23rd September 1967 followed by a son Robert Michael on 18th May 1970. The couple moved into a new home on the Northway during 1967 and once the children were settled at school and with help from her mom, Sheila took on part time work at Ladies Walk Clinic as a clerical assistant. She served the community in this role from 1976 until finally retiring in 2008, a total of 32yrs. During her time at Ladies Walk Sheila helped with the baby clinic and served the new moms with baby food, nutrition and also provided clerical support to the health visitors. During her regular visits to Sedgley village over the years she met many of her clinic customers whose children were in their 20's and 30's.

The family underwent a difficult time during 1982 following the tragic death of Sheila's younger brother Michael, aged 33 years.

Throughout her life Sheila loved to sing and for 30 years was involved with the Church Choir and the Chamber Choir. Sheila also sang with a number of choral groups including The Handle Consort, Cantica, Viva Musica and Penn Singers and was involved in numerous productions with Handel's 'Messiah', Vivaldi's 'Gloria', Gabriel Faure's 'Requiem' and Stainer's - 'Crucifixion' among her favourites.

In addition to her passion for singing, Sheila loved her holidays and was constantly working on her travel plans.

In addition to the regular UK destinations from Scotland and the Isle of Skye to the Channel Islands and Sheila's beloved Ireland Sheila and Michael travelled far and wide. Spain and the Balearics, the Canaries, Malta and Rhodes continued Sheila's love of visiting islands.

Following her retirement in 2005. Sheila settled down to prepare a bucket list for future holidays.

A trip to Canada and the Rockies was at the top of the list. The holiday began in Vancouver and then 14 days by coach through the Rocky Mountains and to Calgary for the spectacle of The Stampede. New England in the Fall was high on the list with a visit to Niagara Falls with a boat ride on the Maid of the Mist included.

During 2009 Sheila developed breast cancer which was treated, and the outcome was positive.

She loved cruising in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic. Sailing into Venice at dawn was a highlight of one trip during 2010. A later visit to Italy took them to Rome, Florence, Verona and Pisa with a second visit to Venice.

Having been treated successfully for breast cancer she was diagnosed with Malignant Melanoma in 2014 and was subjected to 5 years of surgery and scans.

Undaunted by the diagnosis Sheila carried on travelling and during 2014 they took a trip to Austria to experience the lakes and mountains. One day was spent walking part of the Pilgrims Way over the mountain from St Gilgen to Strobl around lake Wolfgang. River cruising was also on Sheila's bucket list and in 2015 she and Michael embarked on a cruise down the Blue Danube from Passau in Germany to Budapest via Salzburg and Vienna with spectacular scenery on route.

During a visit to Turin in Italy they drove to Portofino near to Finale Liguria last visited with the youth club in 1963, a journey Sheila recounted many times during her lifetime.

No matter where the urge to travel took Sheila they often returned to the village of Burton Bradstock in West Dorset and enjoyed the countryside and walked the pathways along the Jurassic coast. Michael thinks she found peace and tranquillity in these beautiful surroundings.

In addition to her many interests she decided, with encouragement, to learn to play golf and whilst she never professed to being a competitive player she developed a level of skill which enabled her to enjoy the game and the beautiful surroundings in which it is played. She also enjoyed the social side of the game and made many new friends as a result of her involvement.

Unfortunately, during 2019, and in failing health, she struggled to live her life as she would have wished but despite the difficulties she still managed to be that wonderfully kind and compassionate person who always put others first.

During the final few months of her life, the love and compassion she had shown to all who knew and loved her was returned with messages of love and support.

Two of her closest friends took on the task of supporting her and the family by providing home cooked meals on a daily basis during the final months of her life .The only reward for them was for Sheila to know in her time of need that they were there for her as they knew she would be for them.

Sheila passed peacefully away in the arms of her loving husband during the early hours of Monday 20th July 2020.

Michael and the family would like to thank everyone who has sent the most wonderful messages of condolence.

The words written by her friends paint a beautiful picture of Sheila and thus provide a most fitting epitaph for a very kind and thoughtful lady.

Don't chase what isn't there

'...those who chase fantasies have no sense.' Proverbs 12:11

Have you ever been attracted to computer gaming? For many people it has become addictive; and they spend so much time in their fantasy world that their own avatar and those of their fellow players have come to seem more real to them than their own family and friends.

You can get so drawn into this virtual world that you can resent the time you have to spend in the real world. Instead, you have come to prefer living in your fantasy world, where you always have the power and control. Problems come when a person spends so much time in their virtual world that they are too tired and distracted to do anything productive in their real world.

Some people say that Christians live in a fantasy world, that our faith has no basis in reality. But faith in God is not a crutch – nor is it a fantasy. Jesus was an historical person who lived and died – and rose again. Those who follow Him as Lord find that knowing Him, and having His Spirit within them, gives them the strength they need to live the right way in the real world, and to reach out to other real people with God's love.

What's in your hand?

September is usually the time when we get back to our normal routines after the summer break. With the current coronavirus pandemic, it's very different this year! However, it is still a good time to consider how God can use us to make a real difference in our workplace, school, family, friends and community. He equips us with everything we need to make His love known.

When God gave Moses the job of bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, He asked the question, *'What is in your hand?'* (Exodus 4:2). Moses was holding his staff, which represented his livelihood (what he was good at); his resources (his flock represented his wealth) and his security (which God was asking him to lay down). God asks the same question of us: *What has God given you?* Our gifts, temperament, experience, relationships, mind, education can be used in the work God has given us to do. How will we use them to make a difference in the places where He calls us to serve Him?

John Ortberg, in his book *It All Goes Back in the Box*, speaks of Johnny, a 19-year-old with Downs syndrome. He worked at a supermarket checkout putting people's items into bags. To encourage his customers, he decided to put a *thought for the day* into the bags. Every night his dad would help him to prepare the slips of paper and he would put the thoughts into the bags saying, *'I hope it helps you have a good day. Thanks for coming here.'* A month later the store manager noticed that Johnny's line at the checkout was three times longer than anyone else's! People wanted Johnny's thought for the day. He wasn't just filling bags with groceries, he was filling lives with hope!

What has God given *you* that will help and encourage others?

Don't allow the modern culture to rule your life

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. (Psalm 111:10)

“Remember,” said W.C. Fields, “a dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live one to swim upstream.” This quotation, reproduced on T-shirts and in management books, appeals to our sense of nonconformist individuality. The reality, though, is that most of us want to belong and win approval. We fear the consequences of challenging toxic organisational cultures, disagreeing with accepted workplace wisdom, or showing any weakness. To go against the flow, to be distinctive in God-honouring ways, takes courage.

The psalmist emphasises that ‘the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom’. This godly fear is not to be placed alongside our fears of the opinions of our colleagues, important though they are, but takes precedence over them. Paul puts it starkly: ‘If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ’ (Galatians 1:10).

The biblical wisdom is not merely intellectual capacity, but is linked with discipline and discernment, shrewdness and skill. It's also profoundly countercultural, as Jesus' own teaching illustrates: in order to live we are called to die; the first shall be last; giving away leads to being entrusted with much (Luke 6:38).

In our relationships, Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). Moreover, God's wisdom, which looks foolish and weak in the world's eyes, is seen supremely in the cross, where it is shown that ‘the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human (1 Corinthians 1:25).

The phrase ‘fear of the LORD’ uses the covenantal name of God, implying a committed relationship of reverence and awe. If we allow the culture of our workplaces and the time pressures we experience to squeeze the fear of God out of our ‘wisdom’, we risk becoming ‘practical atheists’, where our responses to situations are barely distinguishable from those of our non-believing colleagues.

Helping Christians of Central Asia during COVID-19

What do you do when you are persecuted for your faith during lockdown? Open Doors, which works with the Persecuted Church, has shared a story from their partners in Central Asia.

It's become sadly familiar to hear stories of Christian women around the world who are persecuted by their fathers or brothers. But Zebede is facing attack from her own son.

Like many of us, Zebede has been under lockdown at home in her Central Asian country. Her adult son is bitterly against her Christian faith, and blames her for all the family problems. He threatens her, beats her if he sees her reading the Bible, and even rips it. He doesn't like to see her praying, and he threatens to burn down her church. The lockdown has been a hard test for Zebede.

So when Open Doors partners recently arrived at her home with a bag of food, Zebede burst into tears. The supplies were vital, but she was even more delighted to see fellow Christians again.

But Zebede is only one example among thousands of Christians across Central Asia. Lockdown has deprived them of income, and then the local government often deliberately neglects them when official COVID-19 aid is distributed. On top of that, they cannot even meet with other Christians, and are instead isolated at home, often with their persecutors.

But Open Doors partners have been hard at work to bring vital relief aid and encouragement. On-going support from British donors has meant that local churches can be resilient voices of hope in their communities.

One local church has seen their vision expand by twenty times. "We set the goal to help 100 of our local families," says the church leader, Pjetr. "Frankly, we didn't expect to be able to cover so many families. This is a huge amount of money for us. But today we are helping more than 2,000! This is a miracle!"

If you can help Open Doors reach more isolated Christians, go to:

What is a Loan Shark?

Anyone can be a victim of a loan shark – your family, friends, neighbours and even you.

It's not always easy to spot a loan shark as they come in all shapes and sizes and will at first appear friendly, just part of the community. It is when you can't pay that they will turn on you.

A loan shark is someone who lends cash as an unauthorised business.

If someone is struggling to pay a debt the loan shark will resort to threats, violence and intimidation to get what he thinks you owe, even if the debt has been paid off several times over.

A loan shark will typically have little paperwork and, will add penalty charges for late payments. Sometimes they will add random sums to the bill.

Many victims keep paying because they think they can afford the agreed weekly sum, but they don't realise how much their continuing weekly payments add up to or they are too afraid to stop payments.

Our advice is that you should never go to a loan shark. They do not provide a community service; they are simply out to make money.

Loan sharks:

- Are running an unauthorised business under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000

- Often refuse to tell the borrower how much they still owe, when they will finish repayments.

- Often increase the debt or add additional amounts.

- May take items as security- including passports, bank cards and driving licences.

- May resort to violence, threats and intimidation.

What is being done to stop this?

The Illegal Money Lending Team investigates illegal money lending and any related offences- in the past this has included violence, blackmail, drugs offences, threats, kidnap and even rape.

Mikes Story

Aged 17, Mike* was keen to buy his first car. When Peter* offered to lend him £250, Mike agreed and began paying back in instalments until the loan was repaid. It was only then that Peter mentioned additional interest, Mike wasn't expecting this and found it difficult to repay, so Peter offered him a further loan to pay off the first.

This became a cycle and continued over the next two decades, which Mike described as "Sheer hell". He was trapped in a never ending spiral of debt, and struggled to get by, despite working two jobs. He would make large repayments but his outstanding balance would never drop below £9000.

Over the years Mike paid a staggering £90,000 to the loan shark, all from an initial loan of £250.

This had a hugely detrimental impact on Mike and his family. The loan shark attacked Mike in front of his children, he lost his home as he couldn't pay the mortgage and three jobs due to depression. Aged 33, he suffered a stress-related heart attack.

On more than one occasion, Mike attempted suicide.

"You wouldn't wish it on anybody" He said "It affected my relationship with my wife. If I wasn't at work I was home arguing, and it affected the kids. They had nothing. Every Friday and Saturday he was sat outside my work- if I finished late he would text saying 'its payday where are you' It was a living nightmare"

The turning point was when Mike spotted an article in his local paper about a loan shark who had been prosecuted by the Team.

Peter was now threatening to harm Mike's wife and realising he couldn't take any more Mike called the confidential hotline.

From that point forwards he was supported and Peter was prosecuted and imprisoned.

"I wish I'd known there was somewhere to go years ago" Mike said "The Team were fantastic, they offered so much support, and every promise they made they delivered. It was such a relief when I found out Peter was arrested and then put in prison. I nearly broke down when the Team rang to say"

Mike is now looking to the future, and has a message to anyone in the grips of a loan shark.

"I would tell anyone who is borrowing from a loan shark to be confident to stand up and speak out- the Team will support you the whole way. Even a year later the Team are always there for me, regularly in touch and always on the end of the phone.

Life is absolutely fantastic now- we don't have to worry about money anymore and I'm happier than I've ever been. Were going on holiday as a family for the first time in 17 years- I can't imagine ever being able to do this before

Contacting the Team is the best thing I could ever have done. I'm living the life I should be living"

If you think you may be involved with a loan shark, call the team in confidence on

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Mental health and Covid-19

It is important to be as kind and patient as possible with other people this autumn. Covid-19 has turned many millions of lives upside-down, and the resulting distress, anxiety, fear, grief and economic meltdown means that now widespread mental illness is inevitable. So says the new president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Dr Adrian James warns of ‘multiple layers’ to the fallout from the pandemic, both for people with pre-existing mental health conditions and also for those who have never suffered before. NHS front-line staff will need support, while those who have had a serious case of Covid-19 may suffer anything from post-traumatic stress disorder to a full-blown psychosis.

Dr James says: “There will be very significant mental illness consequences of Covid, and we need to be ready.”

Meanwhile, up to one in five Britons may have contemplated self-harming during lockdown, according to some separate research by University College London.

Ditch the commute?

We may prefer to continue working at home, rather than spend hours commuting each day.

A recent poll has found that a high proportion of workers, who are new to working at home, now want to carry on post-Covid, either entirely at home, or at least with fewer than five days in the office each week.

It might mean that commuting to work could fall by as much as a fifth, even after the virus is over, according to the poll by Toluna for KEK Consulting.

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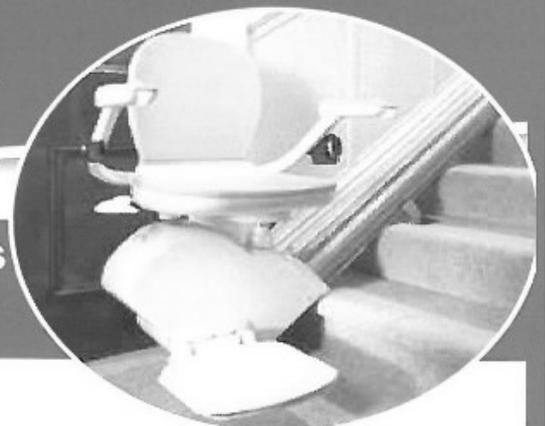
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My dear Nephew Darren



I think your idea for both our Confirmation groups getting together for a weekend away – socially distanced, of course – was excellent and our meeting last week drew most of the plans together. We didn't take any minutes, so let me record the decisions I believe we made.

Since all of us have to sleep far apart at the centre, I am prepared to spend the nights at a local hotel. By chance, I have found that there is a four star one only a few miles away, so I have booked myself in.

As the dining area in the youth centre may be cramped, I am also willing to have dinner each evening at the hotel, thereby creating more space for the rest of you. An additional sadness is that, since breakfast at the hotel is not served until 8am, I will not be able to join you either for your pre-breakfast dip in the nearby stream. It would be grossly unfair to expect you to pack lunch for me, so I will arrange for the hotel to provide me with a picnic hamper for one which I can have while you all enjoy your cheese and pickle sandwiches.

I think it will be an excellent learning experience if you prepare all the teaching sessions yourself, but be assured that I will always be on hand to give the advice of experience. That large armchair near the fire in the common room seems to be the best place for me to sit, so I can keep an eye on proceedings, while I take on the responsibilities for stoking the fire. This reminds me; do make sure that the young people are encouraged to saw enough logs each morning for me to fulfil my obligations. Naturally, my arthritis will prevent me being able to accompany you on your afternoon hikes, but I will cheerfully park my car wherever you leave the minibus, to provide a second vehicle in case of emergencies. I do not mind in the least waiting all those long hours until you get back; I have already found an attractive tea shop in the village.

I am fully aware that not sleeping or dining at the centre, not being responsible for preparing the teaching, nor being involved on the walks will mean that my contributions will be ever so slightly limited, but these are sacrifices I gladly make in order to give you further experience in your ministerial career.

Your loving uncle, **Eustace**

Landmark book explores Celtic Christianity

A retired archdeacon has told the remarkable story of Britain's oldest centre of learning.

Philip Morris, former Archdeacon of Margam, has written the first in-depth history of the monastery and training school founded in the small Welsh town of Llantwit Major – Llanilltud Fawr – more than 1,500 years ago.

St Illtud's monastic community dates back to around 500AD and is regarded as the cradle of Celtic Christianity. It has been called the 'Christian axis of the Celtic-speaking people' and the 'University of the Atlantic of the Celtic period' by church historians.

Llanilltud – The Story of a Celtic Christian Community by Philip Morris is published by Y Lolfa and described as 'one of the greatest untold stories in British history'

School

Mother to young daughter after first day at school: "Well, dear, what did they teach you today?"

Daughter: "Not much. I've got to go back again tomorrow."



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Getting back to work?

When he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. Matthew 20:2

For many of us it is time to get back to the workplace, as restrictions are easing. But can we be forced to go back to the workplace if we are concerned about how safe it is?

Many employment contracts include a requirement for the employee to work at a specific place and during a certain time. Most people are entitled to written terms of employment and this would include information on where to work. Refusing to turn up for work could lead to disciplinary action. The coronavirus epidemic has changed things, so that now an employee is entitled to ask questions about how safe the workplace is.

If you have concerns about going back to work, you should speak to your employer about them. These issues might include worries about using public transport, worries with childcare or other caring responsibilities and how safe the work place is.

Employers have a duty of care towards employees, to look after both their physical and mental health, to comply with equalities legislation and not discriminate against those who have protected characteristics, such as a disability. Under the government's COVID-19 return to the office guidance, all businesses have a duty to conduct a COVID-19 risk assessment. You can ask what has been considered to make the workplace a safe place.

Some employees have a right to ask about flexible working hours, such as coming in before or after the rush hour or working some days at home. You must give reasons and you should consider any compromise if it is refused. The employer is entitled to say no if there is a good business reason.

The key point is what is 'reasonable'. Your employer will want to get back to normal business and it is in everyone's interest to have a productive successful business.

As always this is a light-hearted guide to a complex subject and always get professional advice

SERVICES FOR THE MONTH

We will continue our services online and are hoping that soon the Zoom Holy Communion service will be able to come from a service in All Saints.

The following virtual services take place on Zoom and some will also be available on our parish web site or through audio files via email. For Zoom services and meetings an invitation will be sent to all 3 email News Groups.

The Liturgy, if applicable, will be available on the website or shared on the screen. All Saints service time is under review and so please confirm with Gail times when booking.

Sunday

9.30am – 1030am St Andrew's Church open for morning worship. Please contact Gail if you intend to come , places are currently limited.

9:30am Holy Communion – this will be 'live' on Zoom.

10:30am prayer/worship - praying through the Sunday liturgy individually but hopefully at the same time! – This is available through the email News Groups and includes links to hymns and a printed sermon and is usually emailed out on the

11:30am Zoom virtual coffee fellowship – bring your own coffee to your computer and see and hear some of your church friends; for about 40 minutes – please see the poll circulated to gauge if we should continue as lockdown is eased.

2.30pm to 3.30pm All Saints Church Building open for Holy Communion lasting about 30 minutes followed by private prayer. Please contact Gail if you intend to come places are currently limited.

6:30pm Compline on Zoom, about 20 minutes. A quiet and reflective service.

Tuesday

2:30pm Prayer meeting on Zoom – about 30 minutes following the Prayer in Isolation leaflet.

Wednesday

10am – St Peters – Holy Communion – Please contact Gail if you intend to come places are currently limited.

Thursday – 8pm Fellowship Group on Zoom – everyone is welcome.

Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday

9:15am Parish Prayer on Zoom – an informal time of prayer similar to when we're meeting in our buildings, where we share the Gospel reading for the day and pray for about 15 minutes.