

Parish Life Magazine

**Parish of Cirencester
with
Watermoor and St Lawrence**



Hello again !

September 2020
On-line only

Parish of Cirencester with Watermoor and St Lawrence (Chesterton)

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The Vicarage

‘I have come that you may have LIFE and have it in all of its fullness’ John 10.10

This statement which is of course our Diocesan Vision Statement has greatly encouraged me throughout these strange times. Since March and right up until now, and seemingly on-going; all of us have needed to adapt to accommodate the various restrictions that have been placed upon us.

Indeed we have had time to enjoy our gardens, smell the roses, wake up to the spring and have had some glorious days of summer to appreciate and enjoy. So not all has been bad with Covid-19!

The LIFE vision has really stimulated some of our thinking where it concerns parish life. We have had to adjust in all sorts of ways, meeting each other via social media, worshipping together using our mobile phones and laptops, having the shopping brought to us by a group of fantastic volunteers, queuing to get in to our supermarkets and local shops, the list goes on. Our hands have never been so clean! Our telephone bills increased, but yes this and more has gone on, indeed, LIFE has continued and sometimes it has been even more exciting than the norm.

For some the particular challenges of having to cope with the pandemic have been all consuming and left people feeling very anxious and concerned for themselves and for their loved ones. For others new opportunities have arisen and many people talk excitedly about the ‘new’ norm as we plan for going forward.

The LIFE (*Jn 10.10*) Vision has helped me to focus my energies this last five months, and to remain buoyant as I have tried to go about my work as your Vicar.

Leadership: - I have needed to remain focussed and upbeat as together with my colleagues we have tackled the challenges that working with the pandemic have brought. I think the Ministry Team has done very well all things considered and I thank them for their massive contribution. The core office team especially so. Thank you Sarah and Emily, Hugo and Fiona.

Imagination: - With Hugo’s assistance on the ‘techi’ side of using social media, and Howard Gray’s assistance at keeping the website crammed with information

we have been able to re-invent ourselves. I never thought I would be participating in a daily magazine broadcast to the parish and beyond. The streaming of services was new territory for me and somewhat nervously I embraced the change, nursed along by Hugo. This has appealed to our creative instincts and very soon all members of the clergy team were participating in sharing in the on-line broadcasts meeting literally the needs of 1000s of people. We have been party to some fabulous creativity in what has been offered these last five months.

Faith:- The journey has been liberating. Stepping out into the unknown has been undergirded by this deep sense of ‘belonging and believing’. The Faith community here in Cirencester has been kept alive by the massive sharing that has gone on around social media, pastoral care (pick up the phone) and what I have come to appreciate as Practical Christianity. We have all, those with faith, and those with none re-discovered the importance of neighbourliness. Our trust placed in people (*the NHS*) and the work going on solidly at the heart of this community has only served to increase my faith in people, and throughout to be able to see the outworking of God’s love in all sorts of contexts. It has been powerful.

Engagement: - In an uncanny way the phrase that comes to mind is that I have had to make a paradigm shift in all my thinking. Not everything about the pandemic has been bad! I have been part of seeing the Cirencester Community come to life throughout this whole experience, as people have gone the extra mile, the world around me has slowed down and those values that were sometimes considered to be quaint and old fashioned have once again taken on a new sense of purpose. As the clock stopped during this period, people have rediscovered the importance of neighbourliness and have contributed massively to community. This is a force for the good and needs to be held in all our thinking...2020 the time when the world’s population suddenly woke up!

For me, all of this is quite something as I say my prayers daily, praying for the parish and our parishioners, focussing upon the needs of this community and thanking God for all who give of themselves in all sorts of way. I thank God for LIFE and that we can all have it in all its fullness. **John 10.10 LIFE.**

God bless you all.

Graham. (Vicar)

Church Shop Open

The Church shop is now open during church opening times which are Mondays to Saturdays 10 – 12 noon and Sundays 2.30 – 4pm.

The shop has had to change slightly to allow for social distancing, but all the gifts and cards are still available to you on display. We would like customers to pay by contactless card payment if possible but we will take cash if needed.

We are able to supply churches again with candles and wafers etc and they can e-mail their orders to churchshop@cirenparish.co.uk as can anyone who would like us to order books etc for them.

We are only back at work part time so may not pick up your e-mail or messages on the day you send them but we will reply as soon as possible.

We are pleased to be open again and look forward to seeing you visit the shop.

Caroline & Bron



Lockdown

Locked down,
Locked up,
Locked in,
Locked out.
Whatever your circumstance,
Wherever your cage,
Remember...
I am with you always
To the end of the age.

(Matt 28:20)

J.R.M.



Matthew 20. 1 – 16 Workers in the vineyard



Story-telling has always been an important part of communicating truth. And an important part of story-telling is to keep the audience in a state of expectation as to the outcome and then thoroughly surprise them when that end comes. But in turn that ending has to be credible. The good storyteller includes enough detail to sustain interest but not so much as to obscure the way the story is going. This story is one of Jesus's best.

We can anticipate how the unemployed workers hanging around in the marketplace feel. They are full of anxiety. They desperately need that denarius at the end of day to keep the family fed and clothed. How relieved those workers chosen at the beginning of the day must have felt. Their anxiety was short-lived. The boss had made no fuss – the standard daily wage of one denarius had been swiftly agreed, that evening there would be a meal on the table. Besides all that they had been the first to be chosen – always a good feeling. They may have spared a thought for the ones left in the market-place – but at least they were all right. Hopefully if the work went well there might even be more to do for this boss tomorrow.

Those passed over felt less sanguine. As the morning progressed, they realized that in all probability even if they got any work at all today it was not going to bring them sufficient reward to pay their way. Nevertheless, when the boss arrived again at 9 o'clock to recruit a few more and they were chosen, they were happy enough to be employed not to negotiate the minutiae of a contract. They agreed to accept what he regarded as a fair reward for the work done, as were those chosen at noon, and the group selected at 3.

The group that was still there at 5 pm was desperate. Four times this employer had

come to the market-place, seen them and passed them over. It was bad enough envisaging another day without pay but being passed over that many times in the day, created a lack of self-confidence that bordered on despair. In an age when work brought dignity, unemployment brought ignominy. These men had been judged good for nothing. Their mood was not improved when the boss asked them why they had been hanging about all day doing nothing. They tried to shift the blame on to the bosses: “Because no one has hired us” they obviously replied. This boss was desperate to get his contract finished: he took them on although only one hour remained before sundown and the end of the working day. He made them no offer of pay. They went and did their work – no doubt thinking that it hardly worthwhile – but they went all the same.

The day ends and the boss calls his manager in and instructs him to pay the men. Normally, one would think, those hired first, who had done most work would be paid first so that they could get home first. But they are kept back. The workers are paid in reverse order: those engaged last are paid first. They cannot believe their luck. They are given a whole day’s pay of 12 hours for only 1 hour’s work. The next three groups also receive 1 denarius each. Finally, those who had worked all 12 hours come to be paid. They have seen what the others got and, though they have a contract to receive 1d, they expect the boss to break it and give them more. But they also get the contracted rate.

Suddenly this group becomes disgruntled. They make their feelings obvious to the boss. He has not been fair. They had only received the same pay as those who had loafed around in the market place all day doing nothing. Those who had worked in the cool of the evening for one hour had received the same as those who had put in a whole day’s hard work – including toiling for punishing hours in the heat of the day. The boss reminds them of the contract they had been happy to sign at the beginning of the day. Why should they now be upset? They had had job security and were the only ones in the group who had known what they were working for. The others would all have had anxiety about what pay they would or would not receive. Indeed, the last group had no expectations at all. Why should his generosity to the poor men who had fretted all day be of any consequence to them since they had received the wage they had negotiated?

In the story, of course, that contracted group had been set up. If they had been paid first, they would have gone home tired but happy. Instead they went home exhausted not only physically but more importantly mentally and emotionally from their sense of outrage. The meal they could now afford to buy would be eaten in tears of bitterness.

Many continue to be outraged by this story. But it reminds us that anything we receive from God is not part of a contract. Jephthah famously made a contract with God. Jephthah was the son of a prostitute (i.e. a child of a contract) who became a mercenary who lived by a contract, who made a contract with his half brothers, tried to make a contract with the king of Moab, and then made a contract with God. The result was tragic. It resulted in him having to sacrifice his daughter. (Judges 11). We are totally dependent on God's grace for anything we receive. According to Paul, it is sin that pays its wage and that wage is death (Romans 6 23). But we generally prefer to live with a contract than by faith. Jesus is scathing about those who insist on this professional relationship with God (e.g. Luke 7:36ff). His own relationship is not with a boss but a father. It is not simply one of obedience, though obedience for Jesus is always part of filial love; it is a personal relationship of commitment without counting the cost or the gain.

Paul reminds us that love does not keep accounts (1 Corinthians 13). The group that had worked from the start of the day had had the immense satisfaction of being the first to be chosen: they had had the security of knowing all day that they would get their denarius. Now they envied those who had spent a wretched day being passed over in the market-place, not knowing whether they would have to go home with nothing: experiencing yet another whole day of rejection. Should those who have had the joy of living with the promises of God resent those who have no assurance of salvation? How can those who work for the kingdom of a God of grace resent those who do not experience its joys? Sadly, there seems to be something inherent in religion which works in us to reduce the immense gift of God's love and salvation to a couple of well-earned brownie points in heaven at the end of a lifetime's work.

Bob Gardiner.



Available from the Church Shop



Dear Members and Friends

What strange times we are living in. Will anything ever be quite the same again?

I hope you are all keeping well and safe. Our Diocesan Leader Kay and Branch Leader Shellaine are both doing a wonderful job with their monthly newsletters keeping us all informed about Mothers' Union, and Shellaine's prayers are inspiring and helpful. We had a wonderful closing service in July on Zoom led by Canon Graham. I have to thank Peter for his patience and expertise in helping some members to connect with Zoom on their computers and for ferrying me around town delivering letters containing a copy of the service and instructions on how to listen to the service via the telephone, to those members who do not have a computer or access to the internet. On the day, we had over 30 members take part including 8 listening in on the telephone. Who knows when we can actually meet again in person, but perhaps we can have a 'Tea & Chat' Zoom meeting! Perhaps like me you are a little wary of modern technology but in these trying times it is certainly helping to keep us all connected. As our middle son said a week or so ago at our weekly family Zoom meetings, we are seeing more of you all than is usual! There is however, nothing like actually meeting with each other face to face. Family visits for Father's Day and we smiled for days after looking after our youngest grandson, he is 8, remembering his antics and his conversations. And so it was when we went back to church, so much joy to see each other again.

We do not know when we will be able to meet safely together again, but please continue to knit/and make items for our craft stall which we are hoping to hold in December to raise much needed funds for Mothers' Union. As with so many other Charities at this difficult time we are desperately in need of funds.

Take care and stay safe,

With love and prayers

Kathie Cottey

"Wrestling with God"

based on Genesis 32.v 29 when Jacob wrestles with God,
at the ford Jabbok

We found the ford Jabbok in our midst,
And there we wrestled,
Who is this God who treats with us?
Has he a human face?
And who are we, where from?
The unimagined spin-off of created cosmos
Is our inheritance - of star-dust we are made,
Each atom scrutinised by man,
Until the double helix is revealed

The agonies and the ecstasies, why me? why them?
And all the mad injustices of the world.
How can this suffering be allowed?
If God is on our side, why pain?
And so the questions multiply
Until we cease to search for answers,
But wait with bated breath in silence.

"Where were YOU when I laid the foundations of the earth?
When the morning stars sang together
And all the sons of God shouted with joy?
Can YOU loose the cords of Orion,
Or make a hippopotamus?
Have YOU journeyed to the springs of the sea?
Do YOU give the horse his strength?"
O man, let God be God.
"I will not let you go unless you bless me".

And so we all, hearts strangely warmed,
Our hands in His,
Went, limping, into the night.

T.M.D.

TRANSFIGURATION

I am writing this on 6th August which happens to be the date when we celebrate the Transfiguration of Jesus – and, coincidentally, the day we commemorate the destruction of the city of Hiroshima by an American atom bomb, which, allegedly, led to the end of WWII. This odd coincidence has haunted me for many decades. The bomb produced a radiance “brighter than a million suns” which would have blinded anyone who saw it with unprotected eyes. On the mountain Jesus was suddenly engulfed in a blaze of light which felled his three friends to the ground. Both events are haunted by ambiguities.

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would certainly qualify as a Crime against Humanity now. In the Allied narrative it is often justified because it allegedly saved the lives of untold thousands had the war continued. But recent research has revealed the fact that the Japanese High Command was already in negotiation with the Russians about the terms of their surrender, and it is almost certain that the Americans knew about it when they dropped the bombs. If that is true it was strategically unnecessary, but it fitted the narrative of America as The great nuclear Superpower. Like Belsen, Hiroshima *must* be painfully commemorated but surely not celebrated. It was an appalling horror and it opened the doors to the nuclear arms nightmare which haunts us still. It is surely significant that a number of those who designed and dropped the bomb have since committed suicide. Even if it worked it turns us into mirror images of our enemies.

On the mountain of Transfiguration his friends see Jesus enfolded in a blazing cloud of glory, the Shekinah, which in the Jewish Scriptures accompanies the looming Presence of God. No wonder the disciples were over-awed. There, out of the cloud, Jesus is proclaimed as God's Son, the human face of the invisible God. How overwhelmingly glorious! But the gospel goes on to tell us that it was there on the mountain that Jesus accepts his dark destiny, the “exodus he is to achieve in Jerusalem”, that is his Cross, the deep river of a terrible death in which he has to drown before the glory is truly revealed on the farther shore in the Resurrection.

Up to this point his ministry had been gloriously effective. But it will end in tragedy.

What if anything has this scripture to say to our own dark world? What light has it to shed on Hiroshima and on the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children who have died violent deaths in these two centuries of slaughter. The truth leaps out at us: Violence will never save the world. Peace will only come when all nations are shamed into mutual disarmament – maybe in order to feed the world. Until that moment comes the Jesus People and all who unconsciously follow in his way have to accept the calling to sacrificial non-violent action and protest. It can happen, as John Hume proved in Northern Ireland, but a lot of people have to be prepared to risk their lives for it, as he was. In the End God has promised us a New Heaven and a New Earth in which all shall be well. There the cost is part of the Glory.

H.G.D



Your churches need you – Ride+Stride to go ahead for 2020

Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust (GHCT) are delighted that despite coronavirus Ride+Stride 2020 will be taking place on 12th September. More than ever, historic churches in Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and North Bristol need your support.



Ride+Stride is a nationwide event supported by the National Churches Trust and organised by local historic churches trusts. Cyclists, walkers, and horse riders raise money by being sponsored to visit churches and chapels on any route of their choice. Because of the special circumstances this year, supporters also have the options of taking part in a sponsored activity of their own choice at home, or just donating to the Trust. Of course, everyone taking part should ensure that they follow government guidelines, especially relating to social distancing.

Ray Singleton, GHCT Ride+Stride Organiser said *“We are delighted that Ride+Stride has the go ahead for this year. It is always an important event for GHCT and for the historic buildings we support. With churches having been shut for so long, the need for financial help for church renovation and maintenance is*

probably greater than ever, so raising funds is important this year to enable us to maintain our grant programme. Although this year's event will be different, we are confident it will be as enjoyable and rewarding as in previous years."

The money raised by Ride+Stride will be shared between GHCT and local churches. You can take part as an individual or in a suitably social distanced group – as part of your local church or even with friends from work. In this unusual year we have taken steps to make it as easy as possible to take part by simplifying our processes and materials and participants and local organisers can find all the information they need for Ride+Stride on the GHCT website at www.ghct.org.uk/ride-and-stride.

In 2019, a record figure of £51,000 was raised to support local churches, and we know that for many the pandemic has meant reduced opportunities to fundraise, so supporting Ride+Stride is more important than ever. Remember, whether or not someone actually takes part, they can still support us by donating via our JustGiving page:

www.justgiving.com/campaign/ride-and-stride2020.

For more information visit: www.ghct.org.uk



Mrs. Jones got a little too used to watching online worship from home.

Covid 4: 1-8



1. And he spake unto them, 'On the seventh day of the fifth month of the great pestilence, forty men, women and children gathered together in the sight of God and once they were safely gathered in, the overseer barred the door. 2. And, lo, a poor man came knocking, pleading with the overseer, who stood at the gateway, to let him in. 3. 'Nay,' spake the overseer, 'for to admit you would be to break that laid down by the scribes and doctors of the law, namely that no more than forty may gather together on the seventh day.' 4. The poor man fell to his knees. 'Alas!' he cried, 'for I have a mother who is lonely and sick of the palsy and I needs must shop for her, so she may eat. Let me come in that I may pray for her.' 5. 'I cannot,' spake the overseer, 'for behold, this great door stands betwixt us. The forty are gathered in and, besides, to allow you to enter would be like a wolf amongst sheep, for you have not registered on the admission scroll and have no face covering.' 6. The poor man rose to his feet. 'I cannot pay for such,' he said, 'I am laid off from my work since the master of my workplace cannot manage four cubits distance between us.' 7. 'Away with you,' shouted the overseer, 'get thee hence, for you place our gathering in jeopardy.' The poor man walked away, sorrowing. 8. Which of these is justified?

Howard Gray

The Ten Commandments of Doom - sorry, Zoom

- 1. Lock thy noisy children or foul-mouthed relative elsewhere in thy humble abode lest they distract thy deliberations.*
- 2. Sit thee in the light so that others may see thy comely features. They that sit in darkness may have some blemish to conceal.*
- 3. Place thy device level with thy face so that others have not a view straight up thy nostrils.*
- 4. Likewise an above thy head view may reveal a previously unknown bald patch or where thy roots need doing.*
- 5. Ensure that thy video is on, otherwise a blank square will be revealed thus acknowledging to all and sundry thy total lack of technical competence.*
- 6. In like manner ensure thine audio is enabled lest thou wilt be forever silenced and people will see thee merely gape like a goldfish. The master or mistress of the meeting may mute thee at their whim if too many of those present are giving voice to their thoughts. This may cause thee offence, so thou mayest leave thy meeting in a huff if thou wishest.*
- 7. Be aware of the yellow peril. This appeareth as a box around thine image and announceth that thou canst be heard. The aside concerning someone needing their hair trimmed (or worse) may not go down too well.*
- 8. Remember that the master or mistress of the meeting may be recording thy meeting for posterity. They also may have an account which meaneth that thy meeting may go on for eternity thus causing thy posterity some discomfort.*
- 9. Wear not thy pyjamas for the meeting for it displayeth a slovenly demeanour. Dress sombrely and with respect, preferably in a plain colour so that others may not be dazzled by thy fashion sense.*
- 10. Sit thee in front of thine extensive bookcase so that others may marvel at thy diversity of interests. They may also be thus enabled to criticise thy literary taste, thereby caring not a jot or tittle for the content of thy meeting.*

HG

Interview with Rodney Munday

Rodney Munday, the sculptor working on replacing the statue of St John the Baptist and Virgin and Child, has been interviewed by *Sculpture Vulture*. The interview can be found on the Sculpture Vulture podcast.

<https://anchor.fm/sculpturevulture733/episodes/Bronze-Sculpture-With-Rodney-Munday-ei61fr/a-a2uvaee>.

Rodney talks about his background, his interest in religious sculpture and how he finds inspiration for his designs, in particular how he came up with ideas for replacing the statues in Cirencester. The interviewer is Lucy Branch, who is the conservator for Nelson's column and who has been helpful to Project Black Jack by providing advice on lacquer and conservation techniques for the statues. It's worth a listen.

Meg Blumsom



The statue designs by Rodney Munday for the Parish Church tower niches.

Reviving the call to worship in Bentham

Gloucestershire's only Greek Orthodox Christian Temple is set to start ringing its bells next year - 2021-having received two generous grants from Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust and the Allchurches Trust owned by Ecclesiastical Insurance in addition to local Orthodox community financing and lots of smaller donations, they are now half way to their funding goal.



Orthodox Christian worship is designed to include all ages in many different ways as we worship God 'with all of our senses' - sight, smell, touch, actions and sound – and bringing the bells back into use will enable even the youngest children to the very elderly to hear the call to worship. When they received the building into their care and ownership in 2002, thanks to the generosity of the local Gloucester Diocese Greenway Benefice, it was in a disused state with bicycle tyres stacked to the ceiling and almost bare but for a few old pews. But it still retained very large beautifully preserved stained-glass windows dating from c1890 and the ironwork and pulpit. Through the sheer hard work and dedication of the local worshipping Orthodox community a new heating system and electrical system was installed and a £50,000 interior imported from Greece in fine hand carving and beautifully painted iconography, sympathetically added to enhance the existing features for the unique glory and beauty of a place of worship to God, a true place of peace and tranquillity and otherworldliness in these stressful times that we live in.

The triple bell tower has been derelict for many years, at least since 1996, and has become dangerous as the bells could fall. The committee of St John Chrysostom Greek Orthodox Parish have been urgently raising funds for the past year to fulfil their long-held desire to bring the bells back into use and are now in need of a further £5,000 in order to complete the project.

“It's great to see the insurers putting more back into our buildings and the amazing support from our local heritage Trust – really putting their words into action to bring heritage buildings back to spiritual life.” What does the future hold? “We hope eventually to build community facilities sympathetically to provide for all to be able to participate more fully in Orthodox community life.”

As we say in Orthodoxy – “Come and see!”

**GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
CHELTENHAM AND ENVIRONS** St Peters Churchyard, Dog Lane, Bentham,
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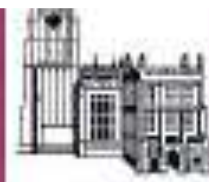


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