

1<sup>st</sup> May 2021

Dear all

I have just about managed to get this letter out in time to let you know details of our service tomorrow. It's been a very busy week!

For the service tomorrow, we are going to try to return to something of the pattern of services we ran prior to the lockdown, namely that, being the first Sunday of the month, we will be having more of an All-Age service, with our Psalm 98 group playing (in a COVID-safe way!). It will still be a communion service, but we will be using a more All-age style of liturgy, including one of the new Eucharistic prayers. There will only be one reading, and the sermon will be a shorter talk. There will also be a puzzle sheet available – meant for children, but anyone can while away a few minutes by doing a quick word-search, and colouring can be very therapeutic! (But not during the sermon!).

The theme of the Gospel reading is Jesus the True Vine, and is very appropriate for this time of the year as our plants start to blossom. Who knows, perhaps our vines in the church hall garden will produce a good crop under the tender care of Chris, John and Linda!

The reading will be John 15: 1-8. We will be singing the hymns 'There is a Redeemer' and 'I the Lord of sea and sky'. (There is a song I know, that would fit the gospel perfectly – 'If Jesus is divine, we must be de branches'! Other verses include 'If Jesus is the rock, I must be a little bolder'. I can't imagine why they banned me from it!!!) There will not be a Psalm printed, but for anyone wanting to look at the Psalm for the day, it is Psalm 22: 25-end.

There will be a service of Choral Evensong at 6.00pm. Please do join us if you are able.

**The Bible study group** continues on Thursday, and we will be looking at Mark's Gospel, chapter 7. New members are welcome. It is not a particularly academic study, though occasional insights are shared. More important is the discussion of how the text impacts and applies to our everyday Christian life. The link is <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8109399155?pwd=STVVVTU44RzJxTFFHbTY1MnI0bjJ2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 810 939 9155

Passcode: 1w2C9a

For the last few years, the Church of England has initiated a 'Novena' (9 days) of prayer from Ascension Day (13<sup>th</sup> May) to Pentecost (23<sup>rd</sup> May), under the title **Thy Kingdom Come**.

This year, support materials include a Prayer Journal, encouraging everyone to pray, and note down their thoughts as they do. I would wholeheartedly support this. We have enough copies for all, and some that can be given away, with a bookmark.

For children, there is a Digital Adventure Prayer Map (They are reusing 2020 maps, which could not be used due to COVID—there is a sticker to make them 2021 maps!). Again, we have plenty of copies to take, as well as some left over to be given away.

They can be found at the back of the church when it is open for private prayer. Alternatively, I am happy to deliver to anyone who would like copies.

In my last letter, I mentioned how helpful it is to share with your next-of-kin what you would like for your funeral wishes, and also to chat about those stories in your lives that others might not know.

I would like to share another lesson learned recently from the circumstances around the death of my mother-in-law, Beula. Both she and my mother were persuaded to have red button alarms – you know, the sort that can be pressed if you suddenly don't feel well, and it alerts a call centre, who can act upon it. My mother was notorious for not wearing it when it would have been rather useful! Beula, however, did wear hers. When she suddenly felt very ill, she pressed it. We had a phone call to say that the alarm company had called for an ambulance, and we were able to phone a neighbour, who went over to her immediately. Although the medical staff could have done nothing to save her, there were two very important outcomes. Firstly, she was found in time to have the best possible care and pain relief, and secondly, it meant that someone she knew was with her in her last conscious moments. Helen and I truly value that. For anyone wondering if it is worth it, we would not hesitate to say yes!

Nick Fawcett's latest post shows how everyday objects and events can spur a prayerful reflection. Here are his comments and prayer on the humble alarm clock:

“To me, prayer shouldn't be separate from daily life, but should arise spontaneously from it, inspired by the ordinary sights, sounds and experiences that surround us... In the following, for example, taken from *Heaven Touching Earth*, the early-morning sound of an alarm clock, with its summons to wake up, gives pause for thought.”

The alarm clock

It woke me with a start,  
its shrill and insistent beep breaking into my dreams  
and forcing me to stir.  
I'd have preferred to ignore it,  
to turn over and go back to sleep,  
but I'd the kids to get to school,  
a bus to catch,  
work to do,  
so I stumbled out of bed in readiness for another day.

Rouse me to your call, Lord –  
your summons to faith, service, repentance  
and commitment,  
however disturbing it may be.  
Instead of sleepwalking through life,  
ignoring what I'd rather not face,  
may I hear your voice and wake up to your challenge,  
ready to live each day for you.  
Amen.

Today's musical offerings (apologies for adverts – it's how they are able to make content free!):

Firstly, Anglican chant (the whole psalm – the portion for Sunday starts roughly at 4:45).

[PSALM 22 CHANT BY Choir of Westminster Abbey - YouTube](#)

And, for total contrast, from the Psalm Project

[My God, My God, Why \(Psalm 22\) - The Psalm Project - YouTube](#)

And, very harrowing, as an Holocaust Lament in Hebrew

[Psalm 22 Holocaust Lament - YouTube](#)

Anthems suggested for this Sunday include:

[Ralph Vaughan Williams - O taste and see - The Cambridge Singers - YouTube](#)

[The Holy Vine by Andrew Moore - YouTube](#)



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark