

The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

This month especially as we approach Harvest there does not seem to be much to give thanks for but perhaps we can take some comfort from the example of Paul even if singing is a bit problematical at the moment!!

Paul and Silas had been flogged, chained and left in a prison cell because they had healed a demented girl. Wrongfully arrested, stiff and bloody, we might expect a different reaction to the one we read about. "About midnight Paul and Silas, at that prayers, were singing praises to God." (Acts 16:25). We might have expected them to pray, many people pray when they are in trouble. But singing praises is perhaps an unexpected reaction. I wonder what the reaction of the other prisoners and the jailer was to this event? Perhaps one or two began to question, and think The jailer did, after the earthquake. The story is tantalisingly brief, it leaves out so much.

What we do know is that the behaviour of Paul and Silas brought the jailer to Christ, together with his whole family. Later, Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians about his joy in them "I thank my God whenever I think of you". Paul was writing from prison in Rome, to Christians, including the jailer, he had met in Philippi. Could he think of Philippi without remembering the beating and the jail? Yet it's a story of praise and joy. Paul was so confident that God was in control that he could take life as it came. Something we are all having to do in these strange times.

It is not always easy to know what God wants us to do, but if we follow Paul's example then we should relax in the knowledge that God is alive, awake and active and we can wait for a door to open.

With praise, joy and thanksgiving,

Andrew

Ride+Stride 2020

Ride+Stride will be taking place with slight modifications to be fully compliant with the Covid-19 restrictions on Saturday 12th

September. The usual gang of three will be taking part – Graham, Nina and Tom (Moore). It would be a

bonus to have more participants particularly during difficult times for the church. We hope you can support us in the usual way, and of course our own church will benefit by receiving 50% of the total we raise. Last year the event raised over £90,000 and the largest single parish total was achieved by Chettle. Please contact the number below if you would like to take part either on your own or as a small group of friends or family.



Graham Luker 01202 723305

ST. BIRINUS - APOSTLE OF WESSEX

(4th September)

Did you ever feel that God was calling you to do something big for Him, even though you were not quite sure of the details? If so, Birinus is the saint for you.

He was a French Benedictine monk who in 634 was made a bishop at Genoa, and sent by Pope Honorius 1 to extend the evangelisation of England. (Augustine had arrived in Canterbury about 35 years before.)

Birinus landed at Hamwic, near Southampton. His original plan was to evangelise Wessex and then penetrate up into the Midlands, where no preacher had ever yet reached. But Birinus soon found the West Saxons so pagan that he decided to concentrate just on them.

Birinus had little to help him become the apostle to Wessex. So, he simply used what he did have: his own two feet and his voice. He wandered around preaching at every opportunity, trusting in God to help him. And He did: Birinus became known and respected, and soon a big breakthrough occurred: for political reasons the King of Wessex, Cynegils, wanted to convert to Christianity, and he asked Birinus to help him.

So Birinus instructed and baptised King Cynegils, who was then able to marry the Christian king of Northumbria's daughter, Cyneburg, and in due course Birinus baptised their family as well.

In return, Cynegils gave Birinus the town of Dorchester (upon Thames) to be his diocesan see. It was a perfect

location: a Romano-British town right on a road and a river, in the midst of a populated area.

During his 15 years as Bishop of Dorchester, Birinus baptised many people and built churches all over the area, with the king's blessing.

Before he died in 650, Birinus dedicated a church at Winchester. It was a glimpse of the future: for Winchester's growing importance made it inevitable that in time it would also become the ecclesiastical centre of the kingdom.

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?

Canon Paul Hardingham

400th Anniversary of the Voyage of the Mayflower

If we find it difficult to cross the Atlantic just now, it was even worse 400 years this month. On 6th September 1620, 102 determined Puritans climbed on board the *Mayflower* and set sail from Plymouth. They had 30 crew to steer them across 3000 miles of open, perilous ocean.

Those Puritans, or 'Pilgrim fathers', could never have dreamed that their journey would become one of the most influential in world history. Their courage and purpose for the voyage would help shape the very history and culture of the USA.



The Pilgrim fathers themselves were in search of religious freedom and a new life. Years before they had rejected the Church of England, due to its Roman Catholic past, and in 1608 they had moved to Holland, where they could worship freely. But life was very hard there, and so the New World beckoned to them.

They had originally intended to use two ships, but the *Speedwell* sprang a leak shortly after sailing, and so they crowded as many as possible into the *Mayflower*. After a long and difficult 10 weeks at sea, they reached America, but could not reach their intended destination, Virginia, because of heavy seas. They finally landed in Provincetown Harbor, Cape Cod, Massachusetts on 11th November.

That presented the next great challenge: the bitter, harsh winter of Massachusetts. Half of the Pilgrims perished that first winter, of hunger and cold. Without the help of the local Indigenous peoples to teach them food-gathering and other survival skills, all of the colony would probably have perished.

After months of hard work, by the 'Fall' of 1621 the tiny colony had its first harvest. They celebrated this great achievement with their new Indigenous friends. It became Thanksgiving. The Pilgrims had been convinced that God wanted them to go to the New World. They wrote: "We verily believe and trust the Lord is with us, and that He will graciously prosper our endeavours according to the simplicity of our hearts therein."

The Mayflower was one of the earliest pilgrim vessels, and so became a cultural icon in the history of the United States. This year, until coronavirus put a stop to things, many celebrations in the USA, England and the Netherlands had been planned.

PAINTING STIRS UP A STORM

A large-scale painting of the Last Supper depicting Jesus as a black man has sparked controversy and heated debate in the UK and around the world.

I reckon that's no bad thing. In fact, it could be really positive.

St Albans Cathedral, 20 miles north of central London in leafy Hertfordshire, has installed the painting – on show until 31st October – to “stand with the Black Lives Matter movement to be allies for change – building a strong, just and fair community where the dignity of every human being is honoured and celebrated, where black voices are heard, and where black lives matter.”

The installation is a striking piece of art and it's provoking strong reactions – just as good art should do.

People are responding with a wide range of opinions. Many have welcomed the artwork, but others are outraged, accusing the Abbey of pandering to a 'political correctness' agenda. Some have described it as seeking to be 'trendy' and riding on the bandwagon of a popular movement.

The Cathedral is a special place to me. I was ordained as a priest there, have served as a day chaplain at the historic building, and I minister at a parish church in the city. Built on the site of an ancient shrine to Saint Alban, Britain's first Christian martyr, the Cathedral has been welcoming visitors for hundreds of years. It stands today as a thriving centre of worship, of community and of hospitality for thousands of pilgrims who visit the Cathedral each year.

The painting's artist, Lorna May Wadsworth, said: "I cast Jamaican-born Tafari Hinds as my Jesus to make people question the western myth that He had fair hair and blue eyes.

"I also knew that, from a previous portrait of Tafari, there is something in his countenance that people find deeply empathetic and moving, which is the overriding quality I wanted my Christ to embody."

Not everyone shares the artist's perspective. A Facebook post from the Abbey promoting the installation drew 400 comments within an hour, as people from around the world hotly argued the case for and against the artwork. One person responded: "The church has not changed the colour of Jesus, they have decided to put on show a piece of art that happens to depict Jesus as black. Let's hope it just gives people a chance to question things they have always just accepted as being right."

Other comments were more critical, with a typical response, "More shameless pandering to Black Lives Matter, bringing trendy identity politics into what is supposed to be the traditional church."

People may object strongly to Lorna May Wadsworth's artwork, or they may welcome it. Either way, it provokes an important debate about the role of race in our society and how we have depicted Christ in western culture.

The Abbey has stirred up a storm, but maybe that's the only way for ingrained attitudes to be challenged, and new perspectives formed.

The Rev'd Peter Crumpler

PSALM 23 - a psalm for the pandemic

There are few psalms as personal and real as Psalm 23. It records David's experience of God as his Shepherd going through dark times. In the midst of the effects of a global pandemic, this psalm speaks to the fears that can overwhelm us.

He Knows Me: 'The Lord is my shepherd...' Just as a good shepherd knows every sheep in his flock, so God know each one of us intimately.

He Provides for Me: 'He makes me lie down in green pastures...' Just as the shepherd knows the needs of his sheep, so God will provide what we need in our lives and circumstances.

He Guides Me: 'He guides me along the right paths...' Just as the shepherd leads the sheep to the best pastures, so God provides the best for us, as we listen and follow Him.

He Protects Me: 'Even though I walk through the darkest valley...' Just as the sheep have no need to fear danger when following the shepherd, so we live knowing God's presence and protection.

He Comforts Me: 'your rod and your staff, they comfort me.' As the shepherd's rod defends the sheep, and the staff enables him to control the sheep, so God comforts us through His Word and discipline.

The final verses of the psalm (v5-6) offer the security of knowing that our lives are in His hands, even through

death, as He leads us to the home we've been looking for all our lives.

Some years ago, a great actor was asked to recite Psalm 23, but asked one of the other guests to do the same. His remarkable rendition was followed by the other man, an older Christian speaking from the heart. Afterwards the actor said: '*The difference between us is that I know the psalm, but he knows the shepherd.*'

Canon Paul Hardingham

TO MAKE YOU SMILE.....

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!"

Politics: the career of plundering and blundering. – Disraeli

Admirer to political candidate: Great speech sir! I really like the straightforward way you dodged the issues.



CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER

TRINITY 13

Sun	6	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Parish Communion
Wed	9	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>
Sat	12		Ride and Stride

TRINITY 14

Sun	13	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Matins followed by a short Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Wed	16	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>

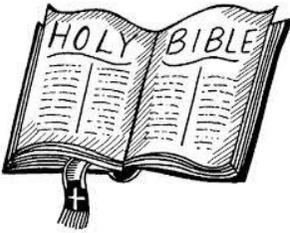
HARVEST FESTIVAL

Sun	20	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Harvest Parish Communion
Wed	23	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>
Thurs	24	3.30 pm	Magazine collation

TRINITY 16

Sun 27 8.00 am

Holy Communion
10.30 am Matins



SUNDAY READINGS **IN SEPTEMBER**

Sunday 6th September - Trinity 13

OLD TESTAMENT: Ezekiel 33.7-11

Ezekiel explains that God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather they would turn from their evil ways.

NEW TESTAMENT: Romans 13.8-end

Paul admonishes his readers to put aside from wrong doing and do what is good for the day of the Lord is near.

GOSPEL: Matthew 18.15-20

Jesus encourages the disciples in their ministry. Whatever they bind on earth will be bound in heaven.

Sunday 13th September - Trinity 14

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 50.15-21

Joseph reassures his brothers that he will not harm them even though they sold him into slavery.

NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew 18.21-35

Jesus tells the parable of the unmerciful servant.

Sunday 20th September - Harvest Festival

OLD TESTAMENT: Deuteronomy 8. 1-10

This passage remembers the forty years in the wilderness and how God brought Israel into the Promised Land.

NEW TESTAMENT: 2 Corinthians 9. 6-end

We are reminded that what we give we will receive. If we sow sparingly we will reap sparingly.

GOSPEL: Mark 4. 1-9

The parable of the sower.

Sunday 27th September - Trinity 16

OLD TESTAMENT: Ezekiel 18.1-4, 25-end

The soul who sins will die. If a righteous person turns away from God and sins, he will be condemned and in the same way, if a wicked person turns to God he will save his life.

NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew 21.23-32

Jesus' authority is questioned by the elders of the people, but they are silenced by his response. Then follows the parable of the two sons.

Curate's Corner

The keener eyed attendees will have, no doubt, noticed that I've been away for a couple of weeks at the beginning of August, and I thought, as it's still slow news season, I'd reflect a little bit on where I've been, and report back.

The Diocese of Salisbury ask all their curates to do some placements as part of their training – in particular, they ask us to undertake a 'rural placement' (oddly, even if the parish the curate is serving in is already rural!) as a part of a wider Church attempt to encourage curates to move into rural ministry. For my training I was placed under Carolyn, vicar of the Bridge Benefice and the Lower Stour Benefice, 6 Churches in total, from Sturminster Marshall up the A350 to Blandford St. Mary, with Spetisbury and Charlton Marshall

on the way, and also including the parishes of Kingston Lacy and Shapwick on the other side of the River Stour.

I'm sure many of you will be familiar then with the setting, having driven up the A350; narrow, long villages with farms on either side, constrained on the one side by the floodplains of the Stour, and on the other by the now defunct railway, which has been reincarnated as a cycle route. Beyond that stretches acres of farmland. Overall, it is a pleasant place, and I have enjoyed getting to know the congregations in the 6 villages – perhaps unsurprisingly they are filled with the same concerns and issues as we are, people being people wherever you find them. The biggest difference is probably that their buildings are, unfortunately, both more expensive and less practical than ours, especially in the time of COVID guidelines, where they are still having to restrict congregations to a fraction of our own. Still, there is something to be said for thick stone walls and dark chancels in the heatwave; the churches remained cool(ish) and inviting. The congregations do tend to be smaller – after all, the villages are smaller – and have a similar age profile to our own – and I realise quite how lucky we are to have the hall and – importantly – toilet facilities! At least 4 of the churches have active building projects to install toilets in one guise or another, with the fundraising, permission seeking and community engagement which goes with that.

But as I wrote, their concerns were not dissimilar to ours; how do we get people into church? How does the church best serve the parish? These questions are being raised everywhere. But there are no simple answers, and the problems run deep and long – I spent a day on a farm on Monday, during the harvest, and it was incredible that a 1000 or so acre farm was being run by 10 people, and the entire harvest by 2, one driving a huge combine harvester, the other a massive tractor with the hopper. Where once there were at least 40 people living and working (plus, no doubt, extras brought in at peak season) now machines roar, and the younger people leave to find jobs.

But whilst there might be a temptation in the church hierarchy to withdraw from these small, ‘inefficient’ parishes, I feel that this is short sighted; each congregation, each village was very different, with different concerns and different solutions needed – the ‘one size fits all’ model that might be favoured by our business oriented leadership doesn’t leave space for that difference of spirit, and the love and wish to serve each community that I saw in each different church – and we can’t know what the future brings.

The Church in Blandford St Mary was cut off from the parish in the 70s when the Blandford bypass was put in – few know where it is, and you can’t walk to it in any case. But now, a new housing estate is being built on the same side – perhaps, they wonder, a time to expand and explore how the ancient church can serve the budding new community. God, after all, has time for the long plans; the deep investment. The spirit can move where it wishes, whether or not it’s ‘neat’ or ‘efficient’.

Amen

Tom

ANGELS UNAWARES

One of those surveys which some newspapers love to publish claimed recently that a large number of British people believe in angels – almost as many, in fact, as claimed to believe in God. They didn’t tell us what people meant by ‘angels’. I suspect quite a few were thinking of young children who die, who are often now said to be ‘angels’ ‘up there’. They’re not, of course. They are transformed human beings. Be that as it may, when Christians celebrate the feast of St Michael and All Angels later this month, there will be many of us, inside and outside churches, who will wonder exactly what or who we are celebrating.

Most simply, the word in the New Testament means 'messenger. An 'angel' is a being who brings to us God's message or his help. In the Bible angels are variously described. The familiar notion of wings and flight comes from a vision given to Isaiah in the Temple when he was being called as a prophet. The angel Gabriel, who told Mary that she was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, is not described at all, but his words are recorded in detail. Angels speak to people in dreams (Joseph, the husband of Mary, for instance) and Jesus spoke of 'angels' who particularly care for children ('guardian angels').

Most people, even very devout ones, have never knowingly encountered an angel, I guess. However, the New Testament tells us that in 'showing hospitality to strangers' some of us have 'entertained angels without knowing it'. Clearly wings and eyes of flame are not obligatory. Just human care. 'Oh, go on, be an angel and make me a cup of tea!'

Canon David Winter

**GORSE - CHEERFUL AND PERFUMED, BUT
PRICKLY!**

The old saying 'Kissing is out of season when the gorse is not in bloom' is based on the fact that it is a rare time of year when a flower or two cannot be found. The bush itself, growing on heaths and moors is well-known for its vicious spikes. This is its answer to the problem of producing leaves that will withstand wind, rain and hungry animals.

The golden yellow flowers are at their absolute best in spring when the bushes, growing often to a height of seven to ten feet, seem to glow in the countryside. They attract bees and other pollen-seeking insects and many of us enjoy the rich coconut-like perfume as well as the joyful colour.

The sharp foliage gives protection to several species of bird as they nest deep in these bulging bushes, and larger animals such as sheep and cows, if grazing nearby, will take advantage of gorse as a very effective windbreak.



In the past, gorse, also known as 'furze' or 'whin', was used as fuel as it burns very readily when dry. This has caused many serious moorland fires in recent years, but gorse is fortunately a resilient species and quickly sends up new shoots from the burnt stumps that remain. It is also apparently somewhat susceptible to frost, but will recover quickly with new growth.

A member of the pea family, its seeds are set in brown, somewhat unattractive pods, which on a hot summer's day can be heard popping, or they may be provoked into doing so when held in a hot hand. However, what might surprise us even more is that in the past, in country districts, it was used for drying washing, as the thorns would allow nothing to escape, even in the strongest of winds!

Kirsty Steele (retired teacher and active church organist)

The Rectory
St James the Least of All



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

A cup of joy!

A tea shop is a wondrous place
Where I for one just love to be!
A place to rest from life's harsh pace
And sit and drink a cup of tea!

Indeed, it's time to take a rest!
From all life's pressures, take a break!
And just today it might be best
To have a slice of home-made cake!



Nigel Beeton

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptism

22nd August

Austin and Abigail Wolverson

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sunday 6 th	Jette Fletcher
Sunday 13 th	Susanne King
Sunday 20 th	Sue Draper
Sunday 27 th	Sue Draper



MAGAZINE DEADLINE

The deadline for the October issue of the
Church Magazine is
Friday 18th September