

The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

"Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe". (John 20.25)

Thomas is the first sceptic. He wants not only to see, but to touch. There are many now who want more proofs that Jesus Christ is alive with us, than we, the members of the church, can give. Yet from being the first great sceptic, Thomas becomes one who is not only satisfied that Jesus has returned, but goes even further. Jesus is for him not only Lord, but God.

We can imagine those disciples trying to convince Thomas, then eight days later Jesus appears to them and says "Peace be with you". We can imagine the tension, the disciples looking first at Jesus and then at Thomas, wondering what his reaction would be. There must be a moment while Thomas tries to take in what he can still hardly believe. Then there must be at least another moment, while Thomas savours this scene which he will certainly never forget. "Put your hands here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing". That which he sees means that there is no need to touch any longer. Indeed, it seems that he had learned that even seeing was not believing, for he goes in his statement beyond even that which he sees.

His response is as far now from a cynical question, as it could ever be. "My Lord and my God" and Jesus says,

"Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe".

You and I stand with Thomas. We belong to one of those many generations which cannot have seen, as those first disciples saw. Perhaps we too have often wished that we could see and touch and hear. Some of us may believe but are not able to say "My Lord and my God", others are certain that they have been in the presence of the risen Lord. For some it is instant and certain, for others it takes a long journey with doubts on the way like Thomas. Wherever you stand, Thomas shows us that there is nothing wrong in doubting and our doubts can bring us to believe in our Lord and our God.

With all good wishes
Andrew

NEW WORK BY JOHN RUTTER

John Rutter, the composer, has written a new choral work in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

Funds raised from 'A Prayer for Ukraine', are going to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Ukraine appeal.

Rutter explained: "How can a composer respond to a global tragedy? I suppose by writing music: like everybody I have been shocked and dismayed by the events of recent days.

"The first thing I wanted to do was write music that would respond in my own way. I went to a late-night service in my old college chapel where they sang a setting of a lovely Ukrainian prayer, so having encountered the Ukrainian text, on Thursday I wrote my own music. I hope the meaning of the text will resonate in people's hearts."

The words of the piece, which are originally in Ukrainian, translate into English as: "Good Lord protect the Ukraine. Give her strength, courage, faith, and hope. Amen."

He added: "I hope it speaks in terms which reach out to the Ukrainian people in their hour of need."

Listen to the new work at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bx4QFxfW2s>

LONGEST OVERDUE LIBRARY BOOK!

If you have ever been late in returning a library book, take heart: the 1704 copy of *The Faith and Practice of a Church of England Man* was recently handed back to Sheffield Cathedral.

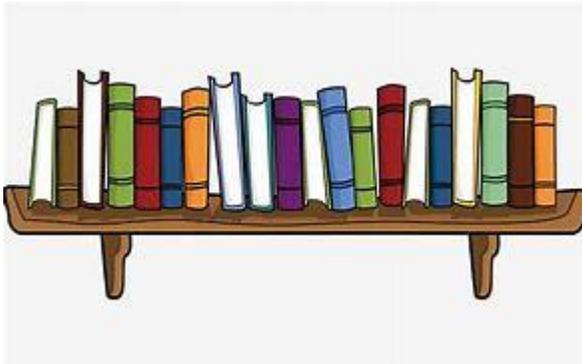
A handwritten inscription inside reads: "This Book belongs to ye Lending Library in Sheffield Church 1709." It left the library just over 300 years ago.

Sheffield Cathedral's Reverend Canon Keith Farrow said that the family of a deceased woman who lived locally had asked in her will for it to be returned.

"Now it's come back home. It's a joy to have this little jewel back in the cathedral."

With overdue fines of 50p a day, librarians could have charged the family more than £54,000 for the book — which itself is worth about £300.

The canon joked: "We might have got a new roof or something."



THE ASCENSION

This month at Ascension Day, we remember Jesus ascending to 'God's right hand' (1 Peter 3:22). It's a somewhat neglected Christian festival, taking place on a Thursday, 40 days after Easter. However, this phrase is used in three different contexts in the New Testament.

Sitting at God's right hand

Jesus occupies a position of power and authority at the centre of the universe, '*exalted to the right hand of God*' (Acts 2:33). This position was secured by His death and resurrection, enabling us to experience the life of heaven, including eternal life, forgiveness, healing and the power to transform lives and communities. Is this our expectation and experience?

Standing at God's right hand

Our experience of heaven is only partial because of the presence of suffering and disappointment in our lives. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, saw Jesus '*standing at the right hand of God*' (Acts 7:56), when being stoned to death. Do we see that Jesus is on the throne and has a purpose for our lives, even when we are going through setbacks and difficulties? As a result of Stephen's death, the church grew and the apostle Paul was impacted. Where do we see the fruit of the suffering in our lives?

Praying at God's right hand

Finally, we are told that Jesus is '*interceding for us*' at God's right hand (Romans 8:34 & Hebrews 7:25). Jesus is on our side at the heart of the universe and fully knows our needs when praying for us. He is for us, even when we feel defeated by the wrong things in our lives. How does this help us now?

So where has Jesus gone? Because He is in heaven, the Ascension opens up the possibility that we can experience the life of heaven, both now and in eternity.

The Rev'd Canon Paul Hardingham

CHRIST'S LEGACY

There was no mourning when Christ's resurrection appearances came to an end. After the final occasion we are told the disciples 'worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy'.

They had already experienced the onset of grief caused by His death, intensified because of the dreadful manner of it and the consequent crushing of their hopes. Then, with feelings combining bewilderment with elation, they were confronted by Christ alive and had to rethink everything they had understood until then about the certainty of death.

They became convinced that the Crucifixion and Resurrection signposted a new beginning, not an ending, and that it gave fresh purpose to humanity, past, present and future.

Why was Christ's final departure met by joy rather than gloom? Here are some reasons, which we might think of as His legacies.

First, He had said that He was going to prepare a place for His followers. It's worth pondering John Chapter 14, to see why Jesus' disciples were so confident after His Ascension.

Second, He taught them His departure was, actually, for their *benefit*. Only in this way would the 'Advocate' come. 'Advocate' is one translation of a word meaning 'called alongside' and is a description of the Holy Spirit's work in and for humanity, then and now.

Third, Christ continues to campaign for the human cause, though now out of sight. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews puts it bluntly: "He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Paul writes something similar in his letter to the Romans. It means that Jesus prays for us nonstop, so when we pray it's like treading on a moving walkway taking us in the right direction.

Fourth, He came to show us what the unseen God is like. When one of His trainees asked, "Lord, show us the Father", the reply was, "Have I been with you all this time and you still do not know Me? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father". So, the more we contemplate Jesus, the closer we get to the unseen God.

The Ven. John Barton

THE HYMNS OF THE WESLEYS

Later this month the Church calendar celebrates the lives of John and Charles Wesley. John's great gift to the Christian cause was the little matter of founding the world-wide movement known as Methodism. His brother Charles had an equally profound impact through his hymns. He actually wrote over 6,000, most of which aren't sung nowadays, but among the ones we do still sing are all-time favourites – 'Love divine, all loves excelling', 'O for a thousand tongues to sing'. 'Jesu lover of my soul', 'Hark the herald angels sing' – and scores more.

40 years ago almost everybody knew quite a lot of hymns, but sadly that's no longer true. Traditional hymns aren't usually sung at school assemblies, not even in church schools, and while the audience for 'Songs of Praise' on BBC TV is substantial, most of those watching are over 50.

With only about ten per cent of the population even irregular church-goers there is inevitably a lack of familiarity with hymns of any kind. Christmas carols are an exception, as is 'Jerusalem' and 'Amazing Grace', because they are frequently heard outside church.

Singing hymns is a wonderful experience at its best – just ask a Welsh rugby crowd singing 'Bread of heaven'! It seems a pity to lose it.

It's not a bad idea to take ten minutes and think about what is your favourite hymn, and why – ancient or modern doesn't matter. Then try singing it in the bath or under the shower – a very purifying experience!

The Rev'd Canon David Winter

A REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE

Margarite Henderson, a Hungarian, lived in the centre of Bournemouth. She was married and had one son, Alan, who was educated at Wychwood, a boys' prep school which was owned by my father. She became very friendly with my parents as she was alone for long periods, as her husband was abroad in the Far East working for MI6 during the war.

In 1956, the Hungarian uprising took place where thousands of Hungarians fled their country. Margarite

decided to drive, in her ancient old Morris Minor, to help rescue refugees to cross the border. This was at great personal risk to herself. Her car was riddled with bullet holes. In Hungary she was known by the sobriquet "The Angel of Mercy".

After the war, she became well known for her bravery and was asked by the Americans to come over and give talks. She was invited to be the guest on the equivalent of "This is Your Life". This was in the days when programmes went out live, no rehearsal, no editing. During the interview the presenter asked her where she was from. Margarite said she was from the South Coast of England. The presenter wanted precise details, so she told him she was from a seaside town called Bournemouth. "Good heavens, I know Bournemouth quite well. I was stationed there during the war in the Hotel Mont D'or (now the Town Hall) which was requisitioned by the Americans".

He then asked her whether she had any dangerous moments. She replied that yes, there was one in particular. She was walking along with her son in Braidley Road, close to the hotel. She had just collected Alan for an exeat from school. The air raid siren went off, she flung Alan into the gutter and lay on top of him. There was an explosion and something metal landed on top of her. She lay there trembling with fear, thinking the worst would happen.

"Yes", said the American presenter. "It was a bicycle".
"How did you know that?" said Margarite, incredulously.
"You are not going to believe this", said the presenter. "I was the young soldier who lifted the heavy bicycle off you!"

What an extraordinary coincidence all those years later.

Jo Tombs



CALENDAR FOR MAY

EASTER 3

| | | | |
|-------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun | 1 | 8.00 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm | Holy Communion Parish Communion Evening Prayer |
| Wed | 4 | 10.30 am | Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> |
| Thurs | 5 | 10.00 am | Parish Art Group |
| Fri | 6 | 10.30 am | Coffee Morning in hall |

EASTER 4

| | | | |
|-----|----|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sun | 8 | 8.00 am 10.30 am | Holy Communion Matins |
| Wed | 11 | 10.30 am | Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> |

EASTER 5

| | | | |
|-------|----|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sun | 15 | 8.00 am 10.30 am | Holy Communion Parish Communion |
| Wed | 18 | 10.30 am | Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> |
| Thurs | 19 | 10.00 am | Parish Art Group |
| Fri | 20 | 10.30 am | Coffee Morning in hall |

EASTER 6

| | | | |
|-----|----|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Sun | 22 | 8.00 am 10.30 am | Holy Communion Matins |
|-----|----|---------------------|--------------------------|

Wed 25 10.30 am Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*
Thurs 26 3.30 pm Magazine collation

EASTER 7

Sun 29 8.00 am Holy Communion
10.30 am Parish Communion

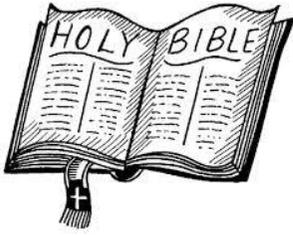
Tues 31 10.00 am Craft Group
Wed 1 10.30 am Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*
Fri 3 10.30 am **Coffee Morning in hall**

THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

We will be having a garden party at the Vicarage, 14
Flaghead Road, on Sunday 5th June at 3.30 pm.

Do come along and join us. Everyone would be very
welcome.

If it's a rainy day we will move the party to the church
hall.



SUNDAY READINGS **IN MAY**

Sunday 1st May - Easter 3

OLD TESTAMENT: Zeph. 3. 14-end

In his vision of the Messianic age, God will come into the midst of his people with forgiveness and mercy to renew them with his love.

NEW TESTAMENT: Acts 9. 1-6

Jesus, whom Saul is persecuting, speaks to him on his way to Damascus and orders him to go into the city and await orders.

GOSPEL: John 21. 1-19

Jesus and the miraculous catch of fish and following this Jesus reinstates Peter as the head of the church.

Sunday 8th May - Easter 4

OLD TESTAMENT: Acts 9. 36-end

Peter goes to Joppa where he raises Tabitha from the dead and stays on with Simon, the tanner. Many in Joppa then believe in the Lord.

NEW TESTAMENT: John 10.22-30

Jesus tells the Jews who gather round him at the Feast of the Dedication that they are not part of his flock because they do not believe in him.

Sunday 15th May - Easter 5

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 22.1-18

After his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, God anoints Abraham because of his absolute trust and faith.

NEW TESTAMENT: Acts 11. 1-18

Peter's narration assures the gentile community that God's spirit belongs to them as well as to the Jews.

GOSPEL: John 13. 31-35

Jesus predicts Peter's denial.

Sunday 22nd May - Easter 6

OLD TESTAMENT: Acts 16. 9-15

Paul and Timothy respond to a call to cross into Macedonia, thus coming to Europe, where they preached the gospel.

NEW TESTAMENT: John 5.1-9

Jesus cures a disabled person at Bethesda and tells him to get up, pick up his mat and walk.

Sunday 29th May - Easter 7

OLD TESTAMENT: Ezekiel 36.24-28

For the prophet Ezekiel those gifts from God which will enable Israel to live up to their share in God's covenant are a new heart and a new spirit.

NEW TESTAMENT: Acts 16.16-34

Paul and Silas are released from prison by the jailer who asked to be saved. He washed their wounds, was baptised and joyously came to believe in God.

GOSPEL: John 17. 20-end

Jesus prays for all believers that they may be complete in him and be brought to his glory.

FORTY DAYS WITH THE RISEN CHRIST

40 days after Easter comes Ascension Day. These are the 40 days during which the Risen Christ appeared again and again to His disciples, following His death and resurrection. (*Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; and John 20.*)

The Gospels give us little of Christ's teachings and deeds during those 40 days. Jesus was seen by numerous of His disciples: on the road to Emmaus, by the Sea of Galilee, in houses, etc. He strengthened and encouraged His disciples, and at last opened their eyes to all that the Scriptures had promised about the Messiah. Jesus also told them that as the Father had sent Him, He was now going to send them – to all corners of the earth, as His witnesses.

Surely the most tender, moving 'farewell' in history took place on Ascension Day. Luke records the story with great poignancy: 'When Jesus had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands – and blessed them.'

As Christmas began the story of Jesus' life on earth, so Ascension Day completes it, with His return to His Father in heaven. Jesus' last act on earth was to bless His disciples. He and they had a bond as close as could be: they had just lived through three tumultuous years of public ministry and miracles – persecution and death – and resurrection! Just as we part from our nearest and dearest by still looking at them with love and memories in our eyes, so exactly did Jesus: 'While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven.' (Luke 24:50-1) He was not forsaking them, but merely going on ahead to a kingdom which would also be theirs one day: 'I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God...' (John 20:17)

The disciples were surely the most favoured folk in history. Imagine being one of the last few people on earth to be face to face with Jesus, and have Him look on you with love. No wonder then that Luke goes on: 'they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.' (Luke 24:52,53)

No wonder they praised God! They knew they would see Jesus again one day! 'I am going to prepare a place for you... I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.' (John 14:2,3) In the meantime, Jesus had work for them to do: to take the Gospel to every nation on earth.

THE STORY BEHIND "THINE BE THE GLORY"

Here is a hymn that is so well known and loved that it has simply burst the bounds of Easter, and gets sung regularly at other times of the year. It has two stories behind it.

First, the music. The rousing music did not start out as a hymn, but instead was written by Handel for his opera 'Judas Maccabeus', first performed in 1746. Originally the words ran 'See the conquering hero comes', for Handel's opera tells the story (found in the Apocrypha) of the leader of the Jews, Judas Maccabeus, who led an army against the Syrians and restored worship at the Temple. With its triumphant refrain after each verse, the music is easy to learn and sing, and can be (and has been!) played to great effect either by the trumpets, on an organ in a large resonant church, or even on guitars (!).

Secondly, the words. They were not written until 1884, which was 138 years after the music. We owe them to the Revd Raymond Budry, a Swiss pastor from Lausanne. Ordained in the Free Evangelical Church in Vaud, he spent 35 years as the pastor of Vevey on Lake Geneva. Budry wrote the hymn in French ('A Toi La Gloire!') to console himself after the death of his first wife, and a year later (1885) it was published in *Chants Evangeliques*. Soon it found its way into English – translated by a Baptist minister from Kingston-upon-Thames, Richard Hoyle.

It is not clear who first had the happy idea of teaming *those* words with *that* music, but when they did, the hymn really took off. By 1904 it was being translated into other languages.

The theme of 'battle' is never far from this hymn, whether it was the battle of Judas Maccabeus, or the battle over sin which was won by Christ on the cross and in rising from the tomb. Easter, of course, marked the biggest victory over the biggest enemies of all time: sin and death.

What would Handel make of it, if he could know that his battle music had become one of the world's most popular and well-known Easter hymns? He was a devout man, working for the poor, praying twice each day, and attending St Paul's Cathedral. So, it seems pretty certain that he would be delighted.

TO MAKE YOU SMILE

Not expecting this

The young minister took his wife to the Maternity Hospital and was told it would be a long labour. So, he agreed to ring at lunchtime for news. But when he phoned, he dialled the wrong number and got the County Cricket Ground. He said: "I brought my wife to your place early this morning. Is there any news?"

He was surprised to be told: "Yes, there are seven out and the last two were ducks."

Those memorable school reports...

What did your teachers say about your progress at school? The following were sent into the Daily Telegraph some years ago....

~ One of my French reports simply said: 'Sheila attended the lessons'. – Sheila Blow, Surrey

~ My housemaster wrote: 'He has an overdeveloped unawareness.' – Ian Jones, Wirral

~ A friend's son's report said: 'By the time he has mastered French, he will be too old to cross the Channel.' – M Knaggs, Dorset

~ My teacher observed: 'The improvement in his handwriting has revealed his inability to spell.' – Colin Sutherland, Switzerland

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL

Sixty years ago, on 25th May 1962, the new Coventry Cathedral was consecrated. The previous one had been destroyed by German bombing during World War Two. The

Queen had laid the foundation stone in 1956, and she was present for the consecration.

On the night of 14th November 1940, the old Cathedral – together with much of the centre of Coventry – was devastated by incendiary bombs, but the decision to rebuild it was taken the next morning. The Provost, Richard Howard, wanted to do so as a sign of faith, trust and hope, rather than as an act of defiance.

This rejection of bitterness and hatred led to the Cathedral's Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation, which continues to give spiritual and practical support in areas of conflict. It is symbolised now by the Cross of Nails, made from three nails found in the roof truss of the old cathedral and set in the centre of the altar cross.

The place now called Coventry Cathedral, on the site of a Benedictine monastery, is in fact two buildings – a joining of the old and the new. The older building, still hallowed ground, was originally a parish church, and then given cathedral status in 1918. Its 295ft (90m) spire, containing 181 stone steps, is the third highest in England, behind Salisbury and Norwich.

The 'new' Cathedral was an inspiration to many celebrated artists, most of them yet to become famous. Among those commissioned by the architect, Sir Basil Spence, were Graham Sutherland (iconic Christ in Glory tapestry), John Piper (baptistry window), Ralph Beyer, John Hutton, Elisabeth Frink and Jacob Epstein, who created the striking sculpture of St Michael defeating Lucifer.

The famous Charred Cross was created when the cathedral stonemason, Jock Forbes, saw two wooden beams lying in the shape of a cross after the bombing and tied them together.

Tim Lento

ALTAR FLOWERS

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Sunday 1 st May | Wendy Bales |
| Sunday 8 th May | Wendy Bales |
| Sunday 15 th May | Wendy Bales |
| Sunday 22 nd May | Rozanne Parsons |
| Sunday 29 th May | Rozanne Parsons |



MAGAZINE DEADLINE

The deadline for the June issue of the
Church Magazine is
Friday 20th May