

care of the Sick and Dying, that clergy are 'key workers.' The diocese allowed clergy to waive funeral fees (*apart from the burial plot fee - which maintains the churchyard*) at the outset of the Lockdown, but then ten days ago rescinded that decision and ended the waiver of all fees associated with funerals.

**The Lych-gate:** You may have noticed that the 'Rough Sleepers' are back in the lych-gate at SMSG. This may have caused you to wonder why, given that the Government had required all Local Authorities to remove Rough Sleepers from the streets and house them in a hotel. This was done locally, but the hotel in MK (not sure which it was) had to ask some to leave because they were fighting each other and stealing from others. Part of the problem is that nearly all rough sleepers have addictions of one kind or another and, regrettably, engage in crime to feed their addictions. At the end of April the Police turned up at the lych-gate as there were five rough sleepers gathering there at one time. They were told to move on, but some have returned.

I have discussed this situation with Louise and Daniel as Churchwardens, and we are agreed that, if this continues, we will almost certainly have to secure the lych-gate from both sides to prevent access. The risk is that given the fact that people are gathering there it becomes a place where transmission of this current virus can take place. Failure to act on our part could lead us to be accused of negligence, which we would clearly wish to avoid. At the time of writing the problem seems to have resolved itself, but we shall need to keep this under review.

**Concerts & Recitals:** As Rector, under the provisions of the Church of England Canon Law B20, I have sole discretion as to the singing and music played in church.

I have been praying and thinking about what will be needed in terms of our parish priorities after Lockdown is ended, and this will entail changes.

As a result of this period of reflection I have decided that I am not in a position to agree to any bookings of concerts and/or recitals for this year, nor any future bookings at this stage. This decision was made all the more pertinent when I subsequently heard the view on the duration of the lockdown period imparted to me via the Area Dean about a month ago and made clearer by Professor Whitty's remarks at the following Wednesday's Government briefing. It seems that the Lockdown is going to affect places where people gather in large numbers for much longer than we all anticipated.

If possible the concerts and events agreed with me prior to the 2020 'Lockdown' period required by HM Government, may take place - but only if the Lockdown restrictions are lifted in relation to Parish

Churches. In addition to those bookings by individual and groups are the already agreed Coffee Mornings, Cream Teas and Christmas Fayre, as well as 'Musica' rehearsals in the Parish Hall; but again only if the Lockdown restrictions are lifted in relation to Parish Churches and such events.

Having consulted with, and the agreement of, the Director of Music, I have decided that no requests for further bookings of concerts other than those already agreed, will be considered or made until after the conclusion of Eastertide 2021, that is: Pentecost 23rd May. The exceptions to this decision will be the Third Thursday Lunchtime Concerts and rehearsals in the Parish Hall.

The period of the Lockdown undergone so far has enabled a considered reflection on what we do as a Parish Church and the emerging priorities that will be needed once there is a beginning of an end to this period and we can resume public worship. What is now clear is that we cannot simply pick-up where we left off, and that we need to meet the real need for spiritual growth. In discussions with other clergy within MK and further afield this realisation is evidently not restricted to our Parish.

In early 2021 Jonathan and I will reflect on what ought to be the pattern of concerts in the life of our Parish Church in order that our priorities are worship, ministry and mission.



The temporary Chapel at the Rectory. The five panel fresco of the Last Supper is normally in my study. The Chalice and Paten are those given to me on my Ordination to the Priesthood (25 years ago on 2nd July this year) by the people of my curacy Parish - Sts Philip & James, up Hatherley. The Paschal Candle is supported in the decorative plant pot by large sea-shore pebbles. The Crucifix that we use for veneration on Good Friday has been cleaned. The top 'altar' cloth was left to me by my grandmother and is beautifully embroidered. Our Lady of Walsingham becomes a focus during the LiveStreaming of the Holy Rosary. There is a small Icon of St Bridget of Sweden at the nearest end of the shelf. Sister Janet created the two 'Cross-Stitch' stained glass window panels. The oval wall plate is of Our Lady of Lourdes; and the round one is of a traditional pattern from the Holy Land. The 'frontal' is the hanging we use for the Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday.



## PARISH NEWSLETTER MAY AD 2020

### From the Rector:

At the time of writing it is nine weeks since the 'Lockdown' commenced. Nine weeks since we were permitted to gather together for Mass and the other Liturgies of the Church. Prior to that we had a Sunday where Mass could only be said privately by myself with one other person present, and before that we had a week where the Faithful were only permitted to receive the Host and the Precious Blood was withheld.

In this period Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter have all been observed without us being able to gather together. Many of you have remarked, understandably, that you have never known anything like this, and that you couldn't have conceived of this happening.

What you may not be aware of is the numerous instructions issued by bishops and others in the Church of England from before the Lockdown. In fact there was one period of eight days where the instructions changed five times. Since then there have been often twice or thrice weekly emails, frequently received late at night with further missives.

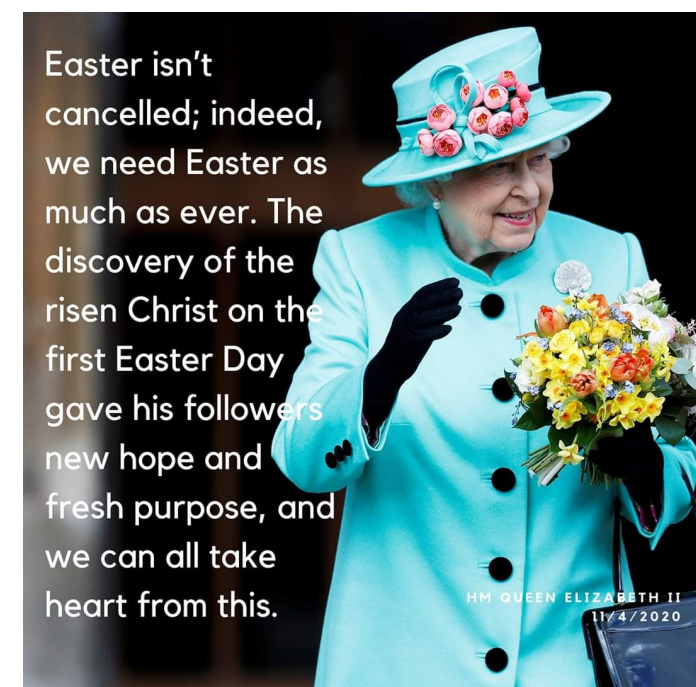
Dire warnings have been issued to clergy that they must not enter their Parish Churches to pray for their people - some bishops have even threatened their clergy with disciplinary action. The archbishops have forbidden clergy not to visit the sick and dying, and not to volunteer as voluntary chaplains in hospital. Interesting that the archbishop of this province saw fit not to apply that to himself and has been recently acting as a voluntary chaplain at St Thomas' Hospital.

The Government Legislation specifically permits the minister of a place of worship to enter the building to pray and even to live-stream a service from it. The archbishops and bishops of the Church of England have told the parish clergy that they must not do so. Challenged on television about this the archbishop stated that it was only guidance. Canon Lawyers have poured scorn upon that saying that using the term 'must' is not guidance.

As it happens the bishops (nor indeed the archbishops) have any right in law (civil or canon) to prohibit a freehold incumbent entering his parish church - in fact it is the Freehold Incumbent who can refuse entry to a bishop!

I am therefore delighted to tell you that I have been entering our Parish churches to pray and to keep an eye on them. I have even been cleaning cob-

webs at high level in St Mary & St Giles, No, I haven't been climbing ladders. The Treasurer agreed that we should invest in an extending pole with a hook and brush attachments. The hook allows the changing of the hangings in the sanctuary without the use of ladders. The chancel windows are now clear of cobwebs, some of which were, frankly, like Christmas Streamers!



Her Majesty the Queen stepped up and gave the nation a Christian Message as we prepared to celebrate Easter.

You may also know that I was one of over 800 clergy and some significant lay people who signed a letter to The Times in protest at the archbishops and bishops recent failures. As one parishioner said to me this morning, 'People can enter a Crematorium Chapel, but not a church!' Two weeks ago I also posted the following message on our Parish 'Facebook' and 'WhatsApp' group:

*'The situation in the Church of England has been utterly mystifying and bizarre, and has led an institution to seemingly not only glory in amateurism, but to wallow in it for seven weeks. To see an archbishop on Easter Day playing Bongo's in his drawing room, and the other celebrating the Eucharist at his kitchen table, when both of them have perfectly adequate chapels within their own Palaces was risible. That, and the continual inadequate proclamation of the Gospel, has led to calls from some clergy for them to resign and return to par-*

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**Associate Minister:** Fr Tunji Adebisi - Tel: 01525 790954

**Honorary Assistant Priest:** Fr Joseph Loveday SSC - Tel: 01327 351511

**Church Army Officer:** Sister Dr Janet Northing CA - Tel: 01908 562148 - Email: jf.northing@btinternet.com

**Arrangements for Banns, Holy Matrimony & Baptisms:** May be made by contacting Fr Ross on 01908 562148

**Confessions:** May be made by appointment - observing spatial distancing.

**Parish Website:** www.parishstonystatfordcalverton.com

**To Hire the Parish Hall (when legislation permits):** 'phone Lesley Salter on 01908 567404





ish ministry. Like many, I've had enough of it.

*What I know is that I'm sick and tired of apologising for the way we have to do funerals, sick and tired of apologising for having the doors locked when every corner shop is allowed to make their own decisions, sick and tired after years of experience in retail management of being treated like a child by an authority that in the words of one priest, "wouldn't gain employment on a zero-hours contract in Aldi."*

*I, for one, will not be waiting for guidance from the bishops once Her Majesty's Government has made it legal for clergy to open their churches. With my Churchwardens, I will decide what is best for the parish that I am Instituted, Collated and Inducted into, and for the people I am called to serve. The fact that we are being portrayed consistently - even by some diocesans and suffragans - as naval-gazing slackers, whilst they get flunkies to send out emails on their behalf, is beyond words. Throughout this crisis parish churches, and more importantly their worship, ministry and mission, have been reduced in importance by the leaders of the Church of England to less than that of a takeaway restaurant. It is small wonder that there are calls for accountability.'*

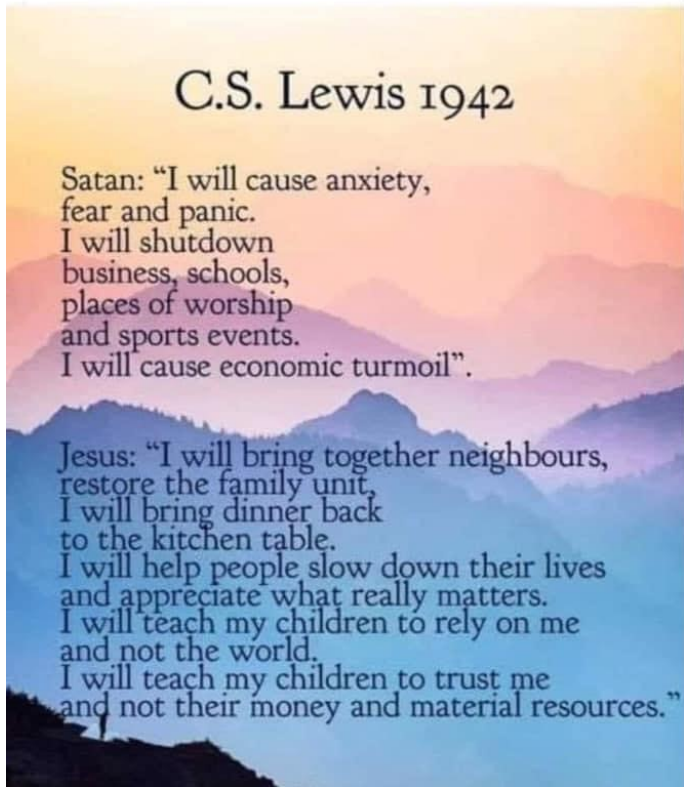
As you may know the Government is considering the possibility of churches being open from early July providing that it is safe to do so and that the infection levels from COVID-19 continue to decrease. I have to advise you that this will, almost certainly, initially be only for private prayer, with restrictions on numbers and safeguards in place to ensure physical distancing. It is to be hoped that, if we are still prevented from celebrating Mass and the other Liturgies of the Church that this will not be for long. However, as I said in my statement overleaf: I will be abiding by the Government Legislation and not by 'guidance' to the contrary from certain elements. As your Parish Priest I want you to know that I will ensure that as soon as we are permitted to by Her Majesty's Government Public Worship (with any required safeguards) will recommence.

A small number of you have asked why I have not live-streamed from church. The issue is the unreliability of the mobile signal. Therefore it has been a purely practical decision to Live-Stream from the Rectory and has nothing to do with instructions from the bishops. Had I been able to Live-Stream reliably from our Parish Churches I would have done so. As it is we are seeing upwards of 50 connections each Sunday and, of course, some of those will be couples and even families joining us. I am posting the Mass Sheet for participants to fully join in on Sundays Sung Mass with hymns. I know a number of you don't use Facebook, but I would encourage you, as some have to join just for the duration of this crisis and just 'Friend Request' me. In that way you will be able to join in. If you have a smart phone do download the 'WhatsApp' and I can add you to the Parish WhatsApp Group which enables us to stay connected as well - again there are upwards of 50 participants at the moment.

There has been a suggestion that after the 'Lockdown' is ended we Live-Stream all of our churches from both our Parish Churches. That would only be truly viable if we could afford to have a broadband connection in each church and all the relevant equipment. Whilst I am not opposed to it, we have to

face the reality of the cost of providing that; and there are questions around safeguarding and the biblical imperative to gather for worship. For those unwell enough to come to worship in church it could prove beneficial, but most of our Home Communicants do not use the internet or have access to it. So, at this time, I would have to caution against that.

## Written by C.S. Lewis in 1942 in response to the effects of WW II....



However, despite the limitations we are called to endure at the moment there is a great deal of good being done among us in the Parish. So many of you are caring for each other, are sending messages of gratitude for the prayer resources distributed for Holy Week and Easter, and participating in our online worship and prayer.

We are also about to launch a series of 'virtual Coffee Mornings' via the 'Zoom' App - please email me if you have the App (or are going to download it) then I can add you to the list of invitees and send you the access code and password to enable you to join in.

Fr Tunji has launched a Prayer Group by 'Telephone Conference' call - and would be happy to add you to the list of those who participate.

The Parochial Church Council is planning to 'meet' in June via Zoom, and as we get used to modern technology there will, I am sure, be other uses that we could put it to in parish life.

On Thursday of this week we celebrate 'The Ascension of the Lord' - a Sung Mass will be Livestreamed at 09:30 on Facebook. If you are able to join us that would be wonderful. In the meantime please do continue to pray for Sister Janet and myself - and pray for one another that our faith may

strengthen and that there may come an end to this pandemic. Pray for the Government, Public Health Officials, Scientists and Medical Research technicians, as they seek to lead us out of this crisis.

*A prayer for those suffering at this time*

O God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, and of all creation visible and invisible, in thine ineffable goodness, look down upon us, thy people gathered in thy Holy Name. Be our helper and defender in this day of affliction. Thou knowest our weakness. Thou hearest our cry in repentance and contrition of heart. O Lord who lovest mankind, deliver us from the impending threat of the Corona Virus. Send thine angel to watch over us and protect us. Grant health and recovery to those suffering from this virus. Guide the hands of physicians and preserve those who are healthy. Enable us to continue to serve our suffering brothers and sisters in peace that together we may glorify thy most honourable and majestic name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

*One of the Trisagion Prayers - used frequently by Bishop Jonathan:*

O Heavenly King, the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, who are present everywhere, filling all things, Treasury of Good and Giver of Life, come and dwell in us, cleanse us of every stain, and save our souls, O Good One.

### PARISH NEWS:

**Chancel Radiators:** for some while now we have been noting at PCC Meetings the condition of the radiators in the Chancel at St Mary & St Giles. Emergency repairs to the boiler were undertaken before the 'Lockdown,' as we had no heat. That repair revealed a further fault with a 'quarter return valve' in the boiler room, which should not have been installed on a new system such as ours. The result was that it had been leaking, and this was probably why the boiler had eventually ceased to work. That second repair was completed a few weeks ago.

However, the replacement of the valve required the complete draining of the heating system and then refilling and testing, and this led to the engineers having a lengthy discussion with me about the state of the two radiators in the chancel. However, it turns out that the valves between the radiators and the radiators need replacing urgently, and the radiators themselves are so rusted in places that they will need replacing at some point. There is a further complication in that the valves are so rusted that it may not be possible to remove them without damaging the radiators, and so the PCC has taken the decision to replace the radiators in any case.

**Finance:** First of all we are hugely grateful to everyone who has continued to give to the Parish Funds to support this mission of the Parish. Without this financial offering our ministry and mission would be seriously weakened. *Thank you.*

Bob, our Treasurer and I recently went through the Parish Finances by 'phone and we are pleased to report that all the standing orders are being honoured and that about 5 or 6 people have transferred from the envelope scheme to standing orders. Some of those who give by envelope have been contacting Bob wanting to know how they can continue to ensure that their envelopes reach us. Bob and I have agreed that envelopes can be placed through either

his letterbox or the Rectory's. We have also agreed that if anyone wishes to make a donation and are a tax-payer then they can place the donation in any envelope with their name and address on the front along with a declaration that they want the enclosed donation to be 'Gift Aided' to the Parish of Stony Stratford with Calverton.

Bills are far fewer given the restrictions and the fact that the Heating Systems in both churches are switched off. However, we are receiving a number of emails (as are all parishes) from the Diocese about the continuing need to pay the Parish Share. As you know we have never refused to pay it, we want to, but are unable to do so in full.

Bob writes:

*'In 2019 the Parish received £11,000 through the two Envelope Schemes and a further £7,000 in loose cash. This £18,000 represented just over one third of all the Planned Giving that the Parish received. The other two thirds was received by Standing Order.*

*In 2020 the General Expenditure (excluding Parish Share and expenditure from Restricted Funds) of the Parish will be over £40,000. So at this time when Public Worship is impossible we need to find ways in which this £18,000 can still be received.*

*If you normally give by coloured (Green in 2019, Mauve in 2020) envelope please consider paying by Standing Order. Please call me on 07834902737 and I'll help you set that up. I'm pleased to say that a number of people have done this already. Remember that it's just easy to stop as it is to start.*

*If you really don't want to do that and you have your supply of Mauve envelopes then please carry on placing your donation inside and either drop through my letter box at 147 High Street, Stony Stratford or through the letter box at the Rectory. If you don't have your Mauve envelopes then you could use any envelope as long as your unique number is written on the outside. If you don't know your number then please call me as I can let you know.*

*If you normally donate by Yellow Envelope then again please consider paying by Standing Order. Please call me and I'll help you set it up.*

*If you really don't want to do that then again you can use any envelope and pop it through my letter box or through Fr. Ross'. If you do this and have given by yellow envelope at least once in the last two years then all I need is your name on the outside of the envelope as I have a Gift Aid declaration from you already.*

*On a separate note, if you were a Planned Giver through Gift Aid in the Tax Year 2019/20 and would like to receive a letter confirming your total donation then please let me know and I will do that for you.*

**All Saints:** The Locks have now been changed and the keys are individually numbered. Jill, as Churchwarden, and Eric & Diane West as the nearest regular worshippers, have new sets of keys in case of emergency. All the new keys have numbered fobs, and, after the Lockdown, as they are distributed a register of key holders will be kept.

A number of you have contacted me about whether you will be able to be buried at All Saints given the number of recent burials there. First of all, can I say "You have a lot of living to do first!" Then can I reassure that, on current rates of burial, even with the increase of late, I estimate that there is enough space for a further 200 years.

**Funerals:** As you will understand a significant part of my time is now taken up by arranging and conducting funerals – indeed it is for this reason, and that of the