

**All Saints Church, Kempston
St James's Church, Biddenham**

Virtual Church News

8 August 2021

10th Sunday after Trinity

Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 0778 6886 710 or email her at stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

A Note on the Covid Relaxations

Following the relaxation of the Covid laws, you are no longer required by law to wear a face covering when attending the 9.30am services. It is also no longer a legal requirement that we hold your details for the purposes of Track & Trace. However, the Church of England is urging caution on relaxing these requirements. We would therefore request that you consider continuing to wear a face covering and providing your details when attending services. We would also ask you to maintain a sensible distance from other attendees. Please help us to keep all members of our church family safe and well. Thank you.

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Last week's reading ended with the same words that this week's passage begins, Jesus saying, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

Our great and glorious government has, over the last few months, added a whole new layer to the work of the humble priest. Before, we had simple marriage registers that we kept in church. Now, at every wedding, the couple and I sign a form which I must take down immediately to the registrar in Bedford so that the data can be entered into a computer. Now couples are no longer just married, they are digitally married.

I don't think this means, however, that you can just list your other half on Amazon at a whim.

I was parking in town just the other day to deliver one of these precious forms when I met an elderly man sitting with his bicycle on the floor. He was screaming and swearing at everyone who passed by. I just went over to see if he was okay but he swore at me and told me that he kills people for a living. To be honest, he did not look capable of killing anybody, but I remember thinking how desperate this man seems.

Continued on next page...



This Week's Services

- Sunday 9.30am: Service at St James's, Biddenham
- Sunday 11.00am: Virtch (Zoom)
- Monday 9.00am: Morning Prayer (Zoom)
- Wednesday 6.00pm: Virtch (Zoom).

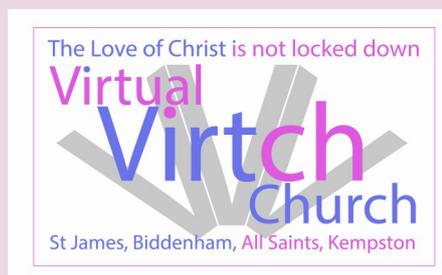
A Reading for the Week

John 6.35, 41-51

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' Jesus answered them, 'Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

Virtch

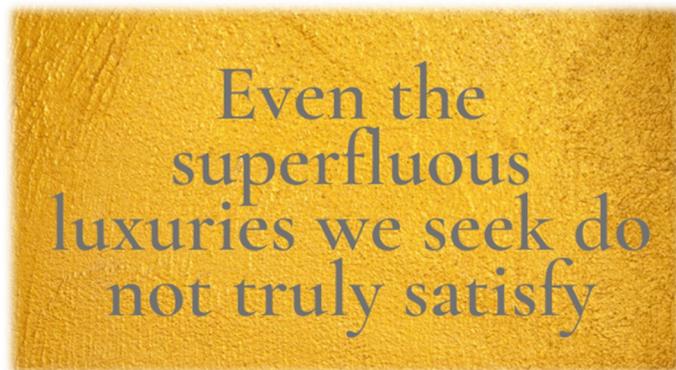
Zoom services are normally held at 11am on Sunday, 9am on Monday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.



Message from Rev Eric Lomax cont...

What I really should have done is called the police, even for his own safety. Perhaps he was a user, or an alcoholic, or maybe through the bizarre threats of death, he wanted me to fear him, because for some people that is the closest they could ever get to being loved. Either way, there was a deep hunger there that needed resolving.

I look again at the concept of wilderness in the Bible. I, like most of us at some point, have been there. It is a mistake to envisage it as a coherent journey through a desert arena from A to B. The story that Jesus refers to in the desert is the forty year journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land, though it was not a journey. I googled the distance from Cairo, the capital of Egypt, to Jerusalem and it is around 750km. It is walkable, though taking 40 years is, how can I say it, not taking the most direct route. These people were not on a journey, they were lost, they were without direction, they were without a home. If it was, indeed, 40 years, though I suspect this did not represent a specific time, then the people who arrived in the promised land were, for the best part, not the same people that left Egypt. Biblical stories are, at times, decidedly minimalist, and it talks about the Israelites in the wilderness being fed with manna and quail from heaven (Exodus 16). Forgive me you literalists out there, but forty years would probably demand being fed more than once. This is the story of a people lost and also constantly sustained. It is the story of a nomadic people over a number of generations, being looked after by their God, Yahweh.



John's Gospel then takes us to another wilderness. Jesus is in the wilderness being followed by a lost people (just like the Israelites), (whom we are told in Matthew 9 are like sheep without a shepherd), and Jesus literally finds this very large, aimless crowd, enough food to satisfy their hunger with a small boy's packed lunch (John 6), but Jesus, a little later, tells the religious people that this food is not enough. In fact, he was quite blunt with them about it; 'I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.'

I think of the man lying on the edge of a car park in Bedford with his personal despair and unnecessary threats. I think about our own hungers and our own wilderness journey, how even the superfluous luxuries we seek do not truly satisfy. I think of how we hunger for intimacy and love, which so often takes us into our own personal wilderness. Echoing the writer of Matthew's Gospel, we are like sheep without a shepherd. This food that we choose in our wilderness does not truly satisfy, and simply leads on our own personal momentum of entropy and death; 'Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.'

Jesus tells us instead that we must believe in him (John 6:29), because he is the only one who truly sustains or feeds us with what we need, and satisfies our hunger for the things that really matter such as a secure destination, freedom and love. It is a way out of the wilderness of our existence. We will not wander round lost with him, but will find life in abundance (John 10:10), because he is the bread of life, and if you go to him you will not hunger.

God bless
Eric

Let us pray...

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples
to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage
never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers
before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen



All Age Reading

2 Samuel 18 v 5-9, 15, 31-33

The king gave a command to Joab, Abishai and Ittai. He said, "Be gentle with young Absalom for my sake." Everyone heard the king's orders about Absalom to the commanders.

⁶ David's army went out into the field against Absalom's Israelites. They fought in the forest of Ephraim. ⁷ There David's army defeated the Israelites. Many died that day—20,000 men. ⁸ The battle spread through all the country. But that day more men died in the forest than in the fighting.

⁹ Then Absalom happened to meet David's troops. As Absalom was riding his mule, it went under a large oak tree. The branches were thick, and Absalom's head got caught in the tree. His mule ran out from under him. So Absalom was left hanging above the ground.

¹⁵ Ten young men who carried Joab's armor also gathered around Absalom. They struck him and killed him.

³¹ Then the Cushite arrived. He said, "Master and king, hear the good news! Today the Lord has punished the people who were against you!"

³² The king asked the Cushite, "Is young Absalom all right?"

The Cushite answered, "May your enemies be like that young man. May all who come to hurt you be like that young man!"

³³ Then the king knew Absalom was dead. He was very upset. He went to the room over the city gate and cried. As he went, he cried out, "My son Absalom, my son Absalom! I wish I had died for you. Absalom, my son, my son!"

St James's Church Barn Reopening!

We are pleased to announce that St James's Church Barn will reopen from 1 September.

We have two new Barn Bookings Officers who will look after all the bookings going forwards. Their contact details are set out below.

All bookings will be logged in our Churchsuite system which should make things easier and more transparent for everyone. If you have a MyChurchSuite account you will be able to view Barn availability and any bookings you have made via that account*.

If you have any queries about the Church Barn or wish to hire it for a regular or one off event, do please contact:

Jane Knight: 07831 172320
Rebecca Balmro: 07769 944727
Email: stjamesbarnbiddenham@gmail.com

Please bear with us while we get to grips with the new system and also note that both Jane and Rebecca are carrying out this role voluntarily alongside their other commitments and may not therefore be able to respond to enquiries immediately.

The All Age Bit!

This week we will be exploring the story of the death of Absalom. You can also find out all about Absalom in the following video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1k-u46tyqY>

David told his men to be gentle with Absalom and not to kill him. Even though Absalom had done many awful things and tried to overthrow his father as king, David still loved his son. David had made his own mistakes in the past and knew what it was to be forgiven and given a second chance by Father God. Can you think of a time when you forgave someone who had hurt or upset you?

Activities

Musical chairs - Absalom, David's son wanted to take his place as King and sit on the throne. Take it in turns to control the music. When the music plays everybody dances around. When it stops, everybody rushes to sit on a chair (or cushion). Take away a chair each round until there is only one person left. Who will be left sitting on the 'throne'?

Nature Mobile - As Absalom was riding into battle he was caught in a tree and left dangling there. Why not go on a walk together and collect some natural items to create your own nature mobile. Choose a stick and then use string or thread to attach the different items you have found.

Song

King of Love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmK-jSJMowU>

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the story of Absalom and his father David. Thank you that even though Absalom made mistakes, David still loved and cared for him. Thank you that when we make mistakes you forgive us. Thank you that your son Jesus died on the cross so that all our sins can be forgiven. Help us this week to show love and care for others. Help us to forgive those who have hurt or upset us; to see others through your eyes and to share your love with them.

Above resources (and more) can be found at Together at Home. www.tath.co.uk.

Virtual Sunday School

Check this out at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMu2bG8L2dp7ywUZVa9uXDA>

There will also be a Virtual Holiday Club from 9 -13 August on the same Youtube channel.

* If you do not already have a MyChurchSuite account but would like one, or you need a password reminder, please email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com.

Daily Hope Phone Line Still Available

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line.

0800 804 8044

Available
24 hours a
day.



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following:

Sunday 8 August

- 8.00am Three Counties Radio - weekly service.
- 8.10am BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship.
- 1.15pm BBC 2 - Songs of Praise.
- 3.00pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Wednesday 11 August

- 3.30pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Prayer/Bible Study Groups

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome. We also have Bible study groups which are open to everyone.

Contact John Lambert for further details, or with any prayer requests. john.c.lambert@gmail.com



Covid-19 Support Networks

If you need support with shopping, loneliness or anything else at this time please do get in touch!

Biddenham: Ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

Kempston: Contact Rev Eric Lomax (328452) or Alan/Anita Lowe (857212).

Suggested Music for this week

Praise is Rising (Hosanna)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7dY_7H7Ytg

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFJvBwgmK_c

Breathe on me, breath of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92vT62xEV34>

There is a day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34ijshZzPu0>

For the beauty of the Earth

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



Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

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Bedford Foodbank

Items currently needed: UHT Milk, Cup-a-Soup, Fruit Juice (Longlife), Tinned Carrots/Peas/Sweetcorn, Tinned Tuna, Rice Pudding, Tinned Fruit, Rice 250g/500g/1kg, Ham (Small Tins), Coffee (small), Biscuits, Shampoo, Washing-Up Liquid, Anti-Bac Spray, Deodorant (Unisex), Tin Openers.

Please continue to support this valuable charity and help them prevent hunger in our community.

