

WELLINGTON & DISTRICT TEAM MINISTRY 28th February 2021: 2nd Sunday of Lent

Welcome to our newsletter this Sunday. We are busy absorbing some of the changes the Government are proposing to what is allowed in our Christian communities.

- The first changes come on March 8th when our schools go back – let us pray for the staff, the children and their parents (and grandparents) that this may go well and safely. From that date weddings will no longer be limited to exceptional circumstances; 6 attendees will be allowed. Funerals will still be limited to 30 – with 6 for wakes.
- From 12th April, all being well, weddings and wakes will be allowed to have 15 attendees.
- From 17th May, all being well, this number increases to 30.
Of course these numbers are also dependent upon the size of the venue, so some of our smaller churches may well not be able to accommodate so many.
- For those of us anxious to resume coffee mornings etc, these will be allowed outdoors from 17th May, all being well, but not until 21st June indoors. We await further details from the Church of England.

Worship this Sunday 28th February and Sunday 7th March

- Worship podcast from Tim Treanor and John Young, the podcast team available on internet or by phone: 01174 288175 (local rate)
- 10 a.m. 'The Home Service' bringing church worship to your front room from around the Tone Deanery. 10Radio 105.3 FM
- 7 p.m. John Young's Sunday evening hymns, with reflections 7.00 p.m. Click on Team Facebook page and from there on John Young's page. This can be picked up later as well.

Weekday worship: Morning Office 8.30 a.m. via Zoom. If you wish to join this small group (currently 4-9 people) who pray regularly together please contact Tim Treanor for details.

Daily Podcast restarts. Worship podcast from Tim Treanor and John Young, the podcast team available on internet or by phone: 01174 288175 (local rate)

Compline 8 p.m. led by Selina and Richard on Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81555085560>

Saturday 27th February afternoon: Creative Reflection on the theme of 'Weaving Hope' led by Fiona Young. Contact Fiona fionareflection@btinternet.com for the link to join this on line.

Lectionary Readings for this Sunday:

Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16 God's covenant with Abraham to make him the father of many nations.

Romans 4: 13 – end Paul explains that Abraham is the proof that righteousness (being right with God) comes by faith (i.e. complete trust) in God, and not by adhering to 'the Law' (i.e. the Torah, or 'teaching' – the first 5 books of the Bible, which, of course, came after Abraham.)

Mark 8: 31-end Jesus begins to teach his disciples that he would need to suffer and be rejected by all the religious authorities. And then those challenging words: 'For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it' - *what sort of 'life' is he talking about saving and losing?*

Collect

Almighty God,
by the prayer and discipline of Lent
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's
sufferings,
and by following in his Way
come to share in his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Post Communion

Almighty God,
you see that we have no power of ourselves to help
ourselves:
keep us both outwardly in our bodies,
and inwardly in our souls;
that we may be defended from all adversities
which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts which may assault and
hurt the soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

World Day of Prayer 2021 – Vanuatu – Friday 5th March 2021

The service for The (Women's) World Day of Prayer, scheduled for Friday 5th March, will not take place locally but a video of the service by the women of VanQuatu will be posted on the WDPIC (World Day of Prayer International Committee) You Tube channel and social media. The theme is "Build on a Strong Foundation". Maralyn Norman (01823 975899 – beaconview@yahoo.co.uk) has a few copies of the service booklet if you wish to read it at 10.30 on 5th March, along with others around the world. Donations to WDP may be made through the WDP website.

Your prayers are asked for people who have died recently and for their grieving families and friends: Eric Hewitt and Jean Veronica White, both from Wellington

For a **Lenten experience with a difference**, an online programme, based in the Holy Land check out <https://sites.google.com/view/geneva-isc/retreats/2021-lenten-program>. This includes a) On-line daily reading, reflection and music entitled 'Knowing Jesus' b) Online stations of the cross on Fridays where we walk virtually via the Via Dolorosa c) On-line Holy Week where for an hour each day we journey through the sites associated with Holy Week with people who live in the Holy Land (several of whom I know).

Some reflections on my ministry and on worshipping and working in the Wellington Team – a personal story.

My first contact with any of the churches of the Wellington Team was at the end of May 2006. I had just finished my training for ordained ministry, but, unlike the rest of my year group, I was not being ordained at Petertide that year. My training course tutors would not recommend me (well, I am outspoken, apt to challenge those in authority and ask difficult questions and generally not let myself be funnelled into particular ways of thinking, speaking and behaving). The Bishop of Exeter (I live in Tiverton) would have to decide. He had told me in January that year to finish my training and then he would see me again. I was eventually ordained in December 2007, 18 months after the others.

Back in May 2006 I was so hurt that I decided the only way I could possibly stay in the Church was to leave the Exeter Diocese. On a Saturday afternoon I drove up the A38. Once I passed the Diocesan boundary I started looking to right and left. I saw the sign 'Sampford Arundel'. Never having been there I turned up into the village and went into the church; it had a wonderful peaceful feeling, and smelt of lilies. I liked the parish magazine and what the vicar, Christopher Rowley said, noted that there was a communion service at 11.15 the following day and proceeded on up the A38.

Having looked at a couple more churches I had the sense that Sampford might be a place where I could find a home; it certainly seemed sensible to worship there the following day. So I turned up to Parish Communion there and was gently and warmly welcomed by, I think, Zoe Skinner. And that is where I worshipped for the next 18 months – apart from a 3-month placement at Exeter Cathedral which the Bishop sent me on (Crazy idea! Me and the formality of a cathedral! but it worked). If there was no service in Sampford I went to Rockwell Green or Thorne.

When I was ordained in December 2007 several members of Sampford Church came to my ordination; as a present the PCC gave me a small pyx to use for home communion services

I served my curacy in the parish of St David's with St Michael and All Angels in Exeter and had a wonderful time. My alternative way of thinking was appreciated rather than stamped on. I developed quite a bit of children's ministry in St David's. 'Prayer drama workshops' allowed the children and me to do a sort of Ignatian type reflection and develop it into a drama for the sermon slot at a Family service or create a whole service together; we created a fantastic Good Friday service - a 9-year-old wrote the script based on Luke's gospel. I worked with a Jewish friend to mould the Maundy Thursday Eucharist around the Passover celebration, a service they were still using 2 years after I left.

The time came for me to do a placement in another parish. My incumbent decided it should be a rural one, as he thought I'd end up in rural ministry. For various reasons it was difficult to find one in Exeter Diocese so I asked Christopher Rowley if he would take me on. He did, and I took services and preached at Sampford, Thorne and Rockwell Green. Occasionally I would play truant from St David's and attend Evensong at Sampford, so kept in touch.

11 months of my time at St David's was a vacancy during which I held the parish together and was able to develop various things. I say 'held the parish together. St Michael's was an Anglo-Catholic church which would not allow me the other side of the altar rail (even to minister the chalice) – I jest not! Yet I did preach there, cared for them pastorally, made sure they always had a male priest to preside and took their sensibilities into account when arranging joint events for the two churches.

After 3½ happy years at St David's I moved to be an 'Associate Priest' in the Sampford Peverell group of parishes. Things were less happy there. They say that for ministry to work out three Cs are necessary: calling, competence and chemistry. The chemistry was just not right so after 18 months I asked the Bishop if I could leave. He put me on sabbatical while I recovered.

In the meantime, Christopher Rowley was about to retire. I suggested I could perhaps help out in the vacancy. And at that point everything started to fall into place. I immediately got 'permission to officiate' in Bath and Wells. I expected to help out chiefly in Sampford, but Anthony Budgett was looking after that; Peter Curtis was looking after Rockwell Green; no-one was looking after Thorne so I focussed my attention there.

Then Tim Treanor was appointed Rector of the Team; we knew each other from the time we were both curates in the Exeter Diocese. He asked me to join the Team and I did, still with PTO. Steve Painting was appointed to succeed Christopher Rowley and to combine being vicar for Sampford, Thorne and Rockwell Green with being the Team 'Missioner'.

I was blithely exercising my PTO around the Team – I think I am the only member of the clergy team to have presided at the Eucharist in every church in the Team. The register of services at Stawley shows I was the first woman priest to preside at a Eucharist there. Midnight Mass at Langford Budville was a joy – the acoustics are fantastic. My speciality seemed to be preaching at St John's at its patronal festival (3 years in a row, I think it was). I took assemblies in Rockwell Green school and led their various school services in church. I had tremendous fun working with Helena Power and Rachel Yates, and the Power, Yates and Rylatt children, firstly in Rockwell Green but subsequently in Sampford where the possibilities for flexibility in Family Services were greater. Tim asked me to lead the Confirmation preparation classes for adults which I did until 2019. There were other study groups as well.

Tim kept trying to persuade me to be properly licensed in the Team. I was reluctant in case things went wrong again. However, at the ordination of a friend of mine at Wells Cathedral Bishop Peter preached on the theme of 'marks of priestly ministry'. He said that one of the marks of our ministry should be 'Recklessness'. At last I had found a Bishop who believed in not doing things the orthodox way!!!!!! I could work under him. As I sat there I remembered time after time when propelled by the Holy Spirit I had recklessly knocked on doors or engaged in conversation with unlikely people and how those encounters had always been fruitful ones. I had found my home, where I could be the me that God called me to be.

Steve stayed only 18 months – combining a parish role and a Missioner role was tricky. Tim Treanor decided that things would be much easier if I were to look after Sampford and Thorne so that a full-time Missioner could be appointed.

To say I was delighted was an understatement. After all, the Diocesan Director of Ordinands in Exeter had told my husband, 'Don't worry, the Diocese will never put her in charge of a parish; she intimidates people'. To which my husband said he replied, 'Well, she may intimidate bishops and she may intimidate you, but she doesn't intimidate normal people'. Yet here I was, being given my own two parishes to look after!

The past few years with responsibility for those parishes have been the happiest years of my life. I have loved preaching, taking Sunday services, weddings and particularly funerals, popping in to schools, meeting all sorts of people all as I go around the villages, knocking on doors and introducing myself, writing for Village Voice... It hasn't all been plain sailing. Raising enough money to enable us to repair Sampford church and make it watertight for future generations was an incredible challenge. But I knew that here was where I was meant to be. I enjoy PCC meetings, as together we wrestle with what it means to be the Family of God in a particular community. I loved doing the team rota for Sunday services.... I could go on.

It all makes me have a strong suspicion that God wanted me here all along, but the only way that that was going to work out was if I left the Exeter Diocese, and the only way that could happen.....

So why am I retiring? Not because I am 73 but because towards the end of February 2019 I experienced God saying 'Two more years'. [You can tell it's God when it cuts across all your normal thought processes, I find.] I argued: 'I do the rota, Lord, and everyone wants a service at Easter. Couldn't we leave it till April?' The answer was a definite no-no. And so, trusting God for the future I am retiring. The short prayer of Dag Hammarskjöld seems appropriate: 'For all that has been, "thank you". For all that is to come, "yes"'.

Thank you to all of you who have been part of my journey in this Team – to my fellow clergy, my fantastic churchwardens, those who have explored Christian thinking with me in the groups I led, the people who have entrusted me to take the funerals of loved ones, Christine and Sharon who are so marvellous in their admin, the schools who welcomed me and enjoyed the interactive assemblies and services, the organists who have put up with me using different tunes and even writing my own words, Helena and Rachel, and particularly to the people of Thorne St Margaret, whose openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose creativity and ability to look outwards is second to none, Stawley, whose Eucharist I took for some 18 months before Martin came, and to my first home parish in this Team, Sampford Arundel. God bless you all. Maria

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