



The Seeker

www.handleychurch.org.uk



April ~ May

2015

The church magazine for St Mary the Virgin, Sixpenny Handley with Gussage St Andrew and St Rumbold's, Pentridge

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Bishop Graham writes

Deep conversations sometimes happen in unusual circumstances. Over drinks recently, a lawyer asked me quietly about innocent suffering. How can a God of love and power allow it? I said that there is no satisfying answer this side of heaven, but that there are hints and signposts in the celebrations of Christmas and Easter. By now we were moving through to dinner and there was little time to elaborate. I mentioned that a lot depends on our view of God.

If we see him as sitting on the edge of the universe, peering down on us and twiddling his thumbs, then there is little hope of hints and signposts. But if we allow the heart of Christmas and Easter to shape our view of God, then things change perspective. He was intrigued. Over coffee, we continued. At Christmas, Christians believe that God became a vulnerable baby. He was nearly killed by Herod's troops, but escaped to Egypt. Our view of God should encompass God himself becoming vulnerable to innocent suffering.

Some say: 'If God made the world with all this suffering, then he should clear it up and pay for it.' In reply, we may only point towards the cross: 'We believe that indeed is the heart of Good Friday.'

It is the linking of the messages of Christmas and Easter which opens up imaginations. Who was it who was born and died? One baby among many? One man among many?

If Jesus was - and indeed is - God as a real human being, then God himself has experienced innocent suffering. We discussed these ideas and agreed to meet again. May God expand our imagination!

Bishop Nicholas writes

Those who have seen the letter from the Bishops for the General Election as an attack on politicians have misread it, or perhaps not even read it. The letter does not tell people what to think about this policy or that, or how to vote; but the privileges of living in a democracy mean that we should use our votes thoughtfully, prayerfully and with the good of others in mind, not just our own interests.

As bishops we support policies which respect the natural environment, enhance human dignity and honour the image of God in our neighbour... (Para 2)

Pursuing the common good is a Christian obligation and is expressed in how we approach our role as voters as much as our personal priorities. We belong together in a creation which should be cherished and not simply used and consumed. (Para 5)

The letter encourages us to identify and talk about the big issues - such as the role of the state and the way we belong together. The letter suggests that in our own country we have become a 'society of strangers', people who live in parallel rather than the connected lives of people who belong together. I think we are struggling to give an account of what it means for us to be English British, European and Global citizens. The letter is entitled 'Who is my Neighbour?' It is the question asked by the lawyer in Luke's Gospel who wanted to justify himself and prompted Jesus to tell the story of the Good Samaritan. It is a story about the despised outsider being the person who teaches good religious people how to be disciples who love God and love our neighbour as ourselves.

The Bishop's letter is available on the Church of England website



News items and articles welcome!

Please drop them in to the Vicarage, or email; ask@handleychurch.org.uk

Thanks!



FROM THE REGISTERS



The funeral took place of Robin Gourlay

The wedding took place of Andy and Emma Kershaw

For Sale...

If you are buying or selling a house in Sixpenny Handley, remember that you do not have to pay for a search for *Chancel Tax*. This was an historic tax that might be payable by property built on land that was once owned by the church. This tax is out of date and cancelled. If you need written proof to go with your documents, please contact the church office.

www.easyfundraising.org
Shop online and raise funds for

Sixpenny Handley Church

Just visit easyfundraising.org and search for our church and follow the simple steps to sign up. Each time you shop online you'll earn us a donation, just by making an extra click!

£345 raised so far!



For those who meet Jesus at the tomb on that first Easter Sunday, it is literally the first day of the rest of their lives. Everything is turned upside down. Everything is new.

The Easter story can be difficult to grasp, all that talk of empty tombs and angels. But we all have little glimpses of this sort of thing when we go through something that changes our life completely. Things change, and in no time it is quite hard to remember what things were like before. And we usually meet these sorts of events with a range of emotions. For those women at the tomb, we are told *'they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy'*.

Think of the biggest change you have experienced in your life and multiply it up by the biggest number you can think of. This is the difference Easter makes.

But the Bible tells us the story very simply. It is dawn on the first day of the week. There is an earthquake and an angel. And the angel says *'Do not be afraid... He is risen... Go quickly and tell...'*. Precise words that reassure, and yet are really urgent. And the women hurry away, and as they go they meet Jesus himself, and he gives a simple *'Greetings!'* and again *'Do not be afraid!'* and *'Go and tell'*.

Everything is over in just a few moments. And everything is different. The world is new. It will never be the same. And ever since, everything has been different.

The Resurrection comes at the end of all four Gospels, but they do not end with an *'and they all lived happily ever after'*. No. Easter is just the beginning. What happens next is recorded in *The Acts of the Apostles*. It is the next chapter. But even that doesn't end either. The story goes on and on. It is now about us, you and me. We are part of the Easter story. It is the first day of the rest of our lives...

Your friend and vicar, Mel



Join us as we remember the Greatest Story Ever – Easter – the story of God's Love

Maudy Thursday

Remembering the Last Supper
(6pm at Gussage St Andrews)

Good Friday

The Story of the Cross around Sixpenny Handley, starting at Oakley Lane (11am)

Telling the Easter Story in words, music and pictures (6pm St Mary's)

See back for full details of all our Easter services

An Evening Prayer

When the day returns,
call us with morning faces,
and with morning hearts,
eager to labour,
happy if happiness be our portion,
and if the day is marked with sorrow,
strong to endure.

R L Stevenson 1850-94

F • E • A • R

There is no doubt that the first Easter Sunday was a shock. Every account we have of it – and the Bible gives us lots of different accounts from different people – describes disbelief, confusion and fear.

Fear and confusion are two things we are generally not prepared to admit to. Most of us grown-ups feel we should always know what to do and admitting we are scared can often seem rather weak. And children might feel it is just... not done...

But you might know the phrase *'Do not be afraid'* is said to occur in the Bible 365 times: one for each day of the year. It is how we react to it that matters...

I came across this idea – that **FEAR** has two meanings;

Forget **E**verything **A**nd **R**un
or

Face **E**verything **A**nd **R**ise.

WORDS WORDS WORDS

One of the basic assumptions we all tend to make about life is that words explain things. When we visit a museum we are often faced with a strange display of things we don't understand. Words come to our rescue – little labels pinned in just the right place. We look things up on our computers or in dictionaries, guidebooks... words, words, words!

Words have the function of taking the mystery out of our surroundings. Do this. Go there. This is what it means. And we are grateful. To say we are 'lost for words' usually means something bad.

We need words, and when we come up against a question, we feel we have to offer an answer. Like white-coated scientists extolling the virtues of a particular washing powder, we furrow our brows in professional intensity and try to say the words that make everything clear.

Truth, we believe, should be understandable. The plain truth. The simple truth. The function of our words is to make things clearer, to solve mysteries, to offer explanations. But what if truth is not always so willing to be defined? What if we get to the stage where truth has a life and will of its own, and resists our attempts to capture and hold it, and it keeps wriggling away just when we think it is in reach?

What if the word truth did not refer at all to a disembodied package of ideas and concepts, but pointed to a person? What if the mystery of it all is all part of the adventure, calling us and leading us farther and farther into ever-deeper realms of exploration?

If this is so, then we need to use words, not to solve everything, but rather to point us on to the next clue, the next level, the next mystery, the next wonder. On, like a trail of breadcrumbs through a forest, on as markers and signs rather than points of arrival.

What if words do not solve the mystery but point deeper into the mystery and beauty of God? Words like these are sometimes called 'poetry'. And if, like me, you tend to think 'I don't get poetry', remember that we sing poetry all the time. We call them hymns, or choruses or worship songs. So perhaps the role of worship is not so much to make all things understandable, but to declare all things beautiful. And mysterious. And of God.

It is about love, and love is not about understanding. It is about being. It is about seeing beauty in all things. It is about God's presence in all things. It is about a baby laid in a manger. It is about angels singing to shepherds and wise men travelling from afar. It is about a man on a cross. It is about hope in darkness. It is about rising to new life, and life overcoming death because God so loved the world. And love is our response.

Mel Durrant

Saturday Afternoons

From 25th April our Saturday afternoon drop-in at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley starts up again. If you are passing – or would like to have a chat with someone trained to listen – pop in for a cup of tea from 2.30pm (weddings permitting!) This is in addition to the drop in in the Post Office café on the first Wednesday of the month and the Walnut Tree on the last Wednesday of the month, when Paul or I will be available to talk about anything at all.

Fairtrade Eggs

Don't forget to make sure your Easter chocolate has either the Fairtrade or Rainforrest Alliance logo to ensure it comes from a good source. How we spend our money makes a difference and says everything about what sort of people we are. And look out for the Real Easter Egg Company, making the only Easter eggs that tell the Easter story!

Teddy Bear Anniversary

Come along to our celebration of another year of Teddy Bears! On Sunday 17th May the 11 o'clock Service will be celebrating our pre-school drop in. Come along for some stories, songs and cake!

Flower Festival and Fayre

There is no Waistcoat Festival this year, but make a date for the Sixpenny Handley Church Flower Festival and Fayre over the weekend of 6-7th June. The church will be full of flowers and cream teas and cakes will be available on both days. On the Saturday there will also be all the fun of the Fayre around the church and Vicarage garden. And we will finish Sunday evening with our own Songs of Praise.

Annual Meeting

It is the time of year to hold our Annual Meetings. Join us at St Mary's on Sunday 19th April at 6pm (in place of the evening service) or at St Rumbold's on Tuesday 22nd April at 7pm. If you would like to help with the running of our churches in any way, please come along!

We have a group going to...



Lee Abbey is a beautiful house and community on the rugged north Devon coastline. Visitors often comment that it is a 'thin place', in the sense that God is felt to be very near. It is a great place for families, as there are lots of things for different ages to do. We are planning a visit over the weekend of 12-14th June. Please have a look at the brochure, the website or talk to us if you are interested in coming – but hurry, places are limited!



+ Bible Study Group

As we hope you see from *The Seeker*, the Bible is THE Book! Read it and understand more in good company on a Thursday evening once a month, 7.15pm. Phone Mike on 01725 552 720 for details.

Come and meet friends

▼ **Drop into St Mary's!** — on most Saturday afternoons from 2.30pm during British Summer Time for a cup of tea and a chat with someone trained to listen.

* **Drop into...** the Post Office Coffee Shop on the first Wednesday from about 11 o'clock, or The Walnut Tree on the last Wednesday, for a coffee and chat with the vicar or curate.

T Teddy Bears

Pre-school children and their carers are invited to St Mary's on Thursday mornings during school term from 10.30am to noon, for fun, drinks and biscuits and maybe a Bible story or two. There is no charge.

◆ Fellowship Group

The Fellowship Group (usually) meet every Tuesday for chat, laughter and biscuits, some talk around serious themes and sometimes a Roebuck steak! Phone Paul Skinner (552 785).

☕ **Men's Group** — A beer and a chat usually on the last Thursday of the month. Details from David Lockyer (552 492).

🌸 **Mothers' Union** — Tea, company and a good talk, usually on the second Thursday afternoon of the month, from 2.45pm. Phone Sheila (553 133) or Mary (552 041) for details.

Join us this Easter and Spring!

SUNDAY SERVICES	St Mary's Sixpenny Handley Informal service includes children's time			St Rumbold's Pentridge	Gussage St Andrew	
	9.30am	☕ (10.30am)	11.00am	6.00pm	11.15am	9.30am
April 5 th	HC		#	#	HC	#
April 12 th	MP		Informal	Evensong	#	HC
April 19 th	HC		Informal	APCM	MP	#
April 26 th	MP		Inf + HC	Evensong	#	HC
May 3 rd	HC		Informal	Evensong	HC	#
May 10 th	MP		Informal	Evensong	#	HC
May 17 th	HC		Informal	Evensong	MP	#
May 24 th	MP		Informal	Evensong	#	HC
May 31 st	HC		Inf + HC	Evensong	MP	#

HC = Holy Communion | MP = Morning Prayer | SofP = Songs of Praise | # = No service

Easter Services

Maundy Thursday — 2nd April

6:00 pm Holy Communion, Gussage St Andrew

Good Friday — 3rd April

11:00 am Stations of the Cross around Handley

2–3:00 pm Quiet Time, St Rumbold's, Pentridge

6:00 pm Readings and music, St Mary's

Easter Sunday — 5th April

9:30 am Family Communion, St Mary's

11:15 am Holy Communion, St Rumbold's

Teddy Bear Anniversary



Sun 17th May

Join us for a bit of cake!

April

See side panel for key to symbols

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 *	2	3	4
5	6	7 ◆	8 HC	9 ☼	10	11
12	13	14 ◆	15	16 T +	17	18
19	20	21 ◆	22	23 T	24	25 ▼
26	27	28 ◆	29 *	30 ☕		

Sat 11 10.00am Men's Breakfast, The Cashmoor Inn

Sun 19 6.00pm Annual Parochial Church Meeting; St Mary's

Tue 21 7.00pm Annual Parochial Church Meeting; Pentridge

May

Updated weekly on our website

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 ▼
3	4	5 ◆	6 *	7 T	8	9 ▼
10	11	12 ◆	13 HC	14 T ☼	15	16 ▼
17	18	19 ◆	20	21 T +	22	23 ▼
24	25	26 ◆	27 *	28 ☕	29	30 ▼
31						

Thur 14 2.45pm Mothers' Union 'Flight into Egypt', Handley

7.30pm Ascension — Holy Communion, Gussage St Andrew