



St Mary's Northchurch Newsletter



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April 2021

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Just over a few weeks ago was a significant moment when we remembered the people who have died impacted by the coronavirus. Prayers were said for the families who have been bereaved. On the radio I listened to an interview with someone whose sister had died and she expressed very powerfully how her sister was not just another statistic, but a person that had left wonderful memories and who had contributed so much to the lives of those around her.

‘.....not just another statistic, but a person that had left wonderful memories and who had contributed so much to the lives of those around her.’

Over the last year there have been a number of similar stories that have impacted upon the Northchurch community and at some funerals that I have officiated at, I have sometimes said that this pandemic is not going to have the last word on a person's life. They and we and not statistics, and love and the value we give to relationships captures something that is far more fundamental and important. In the well-known reading from 1 Corinthians 13, St Paul reminds us that some things may pass away, but “love never ends.”

We are now approaching Easter and at the beginning of the Easter liturgy we respond to the traditional Easter greeting of “Christ is risen,” with the response, “He is risen indeed, Alleluia.” In the Gospel story, we are told that the first witness is Mary Magdalene, and it she who tells the news to the disciples. This is the first step in the building of a new community in which

it would be shaped by a distinctive view of the world. The early church was convinced that the raising of Jesus was a unique event that demonstrated that nothing could separate them from God's love. The inexhaustible possibilities of love meant that whatever the situations that we face or experience, there is always hope and the strength to keep going.

After this recent lockdown the churches are once again reopening for Sunday services and we have the chance to meet together as church communities. The inability to meet and gather together, for church, alongside many other things has been very difficult. Most likely we have all found that at times we have need a combination of patience, determination and persistence. Yet, it seems as if we are slowly moving forward. Most likely the thing that we will most cherish will be seeing family and friends. You sense there will be a chance to appreciate people afresh and share stories and memories. It will a chance to focus on what really is important and a reminder of what is at the heart of the Easter celebrations: that love is the most powerful and durable force in the world.

Rev Jonathan Gordon

‘a reminder of what is at the heart of the Easter celebrations: that love is the most powerful and durable force in the world. ’

Please visit our website www.stmarysnorthchurch.org.uk

Bulbs..... Dying and living



Just before the winter took hold, we travelled to a garden centre with the hope that spring bulbs would be there in their hundreds, I'm glad to say they were! Daffodils and tulips of so many varieties, it was hard to choose. We settled for miniatures to plant under a bay tree and brighten up the patch.

If you look at bulbs, and you didn't know the miracle that happens in the ground over the winter, you possibly would think they were a load of rubbish, and never bother to buy any, even throw them away if they were sitting in a pile, wouldn't you?

Because we do know what transformation these bulbs take, we gladly put these dead brown bulbs in the ground and wait for that spectacular show that comes every year in springtime. A colourful display that brightens up our gardens after a long cold and hard winter. It's such a welcome sight and as we look out of our windows to see them in window boxes or pots or borders, they always bring a smile to our lives and the hope of warmer days to come. The winter is over,



and springtime has arrived.

Well, that is exactly what Jesus did for each one of us! He brought life out of death. He died on Good Friday and was risen on Easter Sunday.

When we talk about the Easter story, we remember Jesus on Good Friday. A very painful day on the cross, but even then, one of the robbers on a cross next to him believed that he was someone special and in his last minutes of his life believed that Jesus was the Son of God. Then the soldier who came to his side to prepare the bodies before the Sabbath also came to believe. He realised that Jesus was already dead and pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood



and water came out. That soldier then realised that all that was being said about Jesus was true and he testified that Jesus was who he said he was, and he believed [John 19].

Our lives can be just like these bulbs. A transformation can take place even if we think we are so undeserving. "He died that we might be forgiven, He died to make us good, that we might go at last to heaven, saved by his precious blood", the hymn says.

We look forward to seeing these bulbs transform from a brown uninteresting bulb to a beautiful flower each year and that transformation can happen in our own lives too, all we have to do is put our hands in the hands of Jesus.

Jesus gives us life eternal as he plants his life in ours, and we plant our lives in him.

Happy Easter!
Peggy Sear

After reading the Gospel of St John

During Lent, we have read a large part of the gospel of John, for five minutes each day on Facebook. We found a book that is carefully put together. John may mention a theme which he then seems to forget, only for it to re-emerge later. So at the start of the gospel John the Baptist calls Jesus the Lamb of God. As we near the end of the gospel, we realise that Jesus is being crucified at the moment when the Passover lambs are sacrificed. Those lambs are connected in John's mind.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night at the start of the gospel. He then re-appears twice more, near the middle and towards the end. John wants us to ask ourselves whether Nicodemus has learned something in the meantime.

John is not a reporter, speaking news to the world as it happens. Nor is he writing a biography of Jesus, or a history of those times. He is looking back from years later, talking about what it all means.

Modern readers will search in vain for any hint of how Jesus could have worked his miracles. John is not interested in how he did them, but what they meant.

The gospel comes from the "disciple whom Jesus loved", repeatedly referred to but never named. Another hand may have put final touches to it. It is named John only by tradition. Many of his stories take place in Jerusalem, around the Jewish festivals. He may have lived there. He has a very shrewd sense of what Jesus' ministry was all about. Indeed, if Peter was often first to act he, the beloved disciple, was often quicker to understand.

The gospel is about the love of God for his people. That love is so great that he sends his Son to live among them and to draw them to follow him. The Son shows that love by allowing himself to be subject to rejection, ill-treatment and a horrifying death. Yet by his example he shows us that, if we trust God, we will be vindicated.

John is convinced that we see the real glory of God at the moment of Jesus' death upon the cross. There we see true kingship, as Jesus gives himself

entirely in love to his people. That love draws us to God. Jesus' example, lived and died, promises that whatever life may throw at God's people, God will bring them to life in its fulness. This message is counter-cultural. It stands the world on its head.

The purpose of the gospel is to convince its readers to believe in Jesus and thereby to find that abundant life. It makes its argument through many powerful moments and delights careful readers with little jewels.

It is unfortunately lost in translation that, on Easter morning, Mary Magdalene (Maria in Greek) is standing weeping outside the tomb. Turning, she sees someone she thinks must be the gardener. After some tearful words, she looks away again, only to hear a voice say, "Mariam" (Mary in Aramaic). Hearing her own name in her everyday language, she turns again, to see with amazement the risen Jesus. "Rabbouni!" she exclaims, also in Aramaic.

In the middle of the gospel, Jesus says that he calls his own sheep by name and they hear his voice. John shows us that Jesus really meant what he said. With that little change, from Maria to Mariam, he made sure she heard him. John means that, if we listen, Jesus calls us by name, too.

David White



Lent, St John and me

Lent for me was very different this year. I gave something up: effectively half an hour each day. I did something positive: I used that half hour to make recordings.

So where did St John fit in? David White wrote in last month's Newsletter about *Reading the Gospel of St John throughout Lent*. I was part of David's trio that made the recordings.

Listening to Caroline's readings of the Gospel, I realised that it was unfamiliar. I 'knew' the general content, but readings in church tend to be from Matthew, Mark and Luke, so I did not recognise the phraseology. There was no Sermon on the Mount, and a shortage of parables. I felt as if I were being taken through the life of Jesus for the first time.

David read his personal reflections on each day: flashbacks to the Old Testament; setting the words in the context of John's time – and in ours; wondering how the protagonists might have been thinking; encouraging us to 'see' more in the readings than we had understood before.

Each day's recording concluded with the prayer which David had written and which I read. 'Talking with Jesus' was the style adopted, something I found both unconventional and challenging. There was no way in which I could have read each prayer straight off the page. Thoughts, questions, re-statement of beliefs, wonderings, doubts – if I managed to express these at all appropriately, then credit must be given to the Holy Spirit.

If it is Holy Week when you read this, you will be able to catch the last of our recordings on www.facebook.com/stmarynorthchurch

Valerie Clark



Who Would Live in a House Like This?

Woodcock Hill – Part 3

Anyone travelling by train into London from Berkhamsted would invariably be met with the smell of freshly baked biscuits and cakes coming into the carriages as the train sped through Harlesden. Regular travellers would know that this pleasing aroma came from the McVitie factory located alongside the railway track just past the North Circular Road railway bridge. The fact that this factory had a direct connection with Woodcock Hill in Northchurch is less known.

The McVitie brand originated in Edinburgh in 1839 when William McVitie and his son, Robert, opened a shop selling food and included a small bakery. The bakery proved extremely successful and with more shops being opened in Edinburgh Robert McVitie decided to send his two sons, William and Robert (jnr), to study baking techniques in Europe.

Robert McVitie (jnr) was born in 1854 and took over the running of the business in 1880. Wanting to develop the firm further, he spent some time in the United States looking at the latest biscuit making techniques and in 1888 Charles Price, who had joined the company in the 1870s, became a partner in the

firm. Now renamed McVitie and Price, Charles Price specialising in the marketing of the company's products, whilst Robert McVitie continued to look at production techniques. In 1888 a new factory opened in Edinburgh.

1893 was a particularly special year for McVitie and Price when the company was given the royal seal of approval – it was asked to bake the wedding cake for the future Queen Mary and King George V. The company continued to expand, and in 1902 the first factory outside of Scotland was opened in Harlesden, north London. Deciding to concentrate on the growing London outlet, Robert McVitie moved south with his wife, Louisa, and in 1907 purchased Woodcock Hill.

The location of Woodcock Hill was ideal, sufficiently far away, yet easily accessible to London, Robert McVitie regularly took the train from Berkhamsted station to Willesden Junction station (which then had lower level platforms on the line into Euston) and walked the remaining short distance to his factory.

Robert McVitie died in 1910, aged 57, but his widow, Louisa, stayed on at Woodcock Hill. In the 1911 Census she is shown as employing five domestic servants at the house. Several years later, however, she was involved in a riding accident which left her a partial invalid. In due course she moved back to Scotland, but still received regular hampers of fresh produce grown on the Woodcock Hill estate. Three years before her death in 1928, Woodcock Hill was put up for sale.

To be continued

Richard North



The McVitie factory at Willesden Junction

PARISH PANTRY @ St Mary's



Food needs for April

**The following items are in short supply as we meet the needs of our community through April.
Can you help, please?**

NON-FOOD

Bleach
Surface Cleaner
Antibacterial cleaner/wipes
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FOOD

UHT Milk
Tuna fish
Cereals
Tinned meats/pies
Tinned vegetables
Tinned fruit
Tinned/packet soup
Tinned custard
Stock pots
Tinned Rice Pudding
Coffee
Pasta sauces

The donation box can be found on the table just inside the side door of the church.

The Coronavirus has changed our country and our church in ways we could have never anticipated.

**The Church of England, being present in every community, is well placed to lead and co-ordinate efforts to help those who find themselves in need.
2021 will be a time of adaptation and innovation for the church and we all need to be part of it.**

**“For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat”
Matthew 25:35 NIV**

The Parish Pantry

St Mary's Church runs one of the Northchurch Community Pantry venues and is open daily for donations or if you need help.

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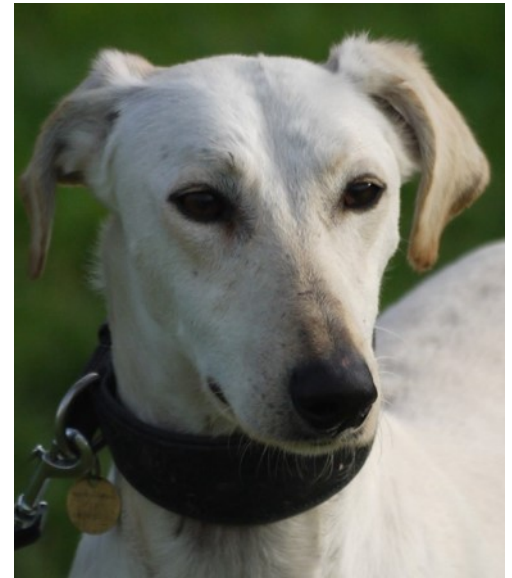
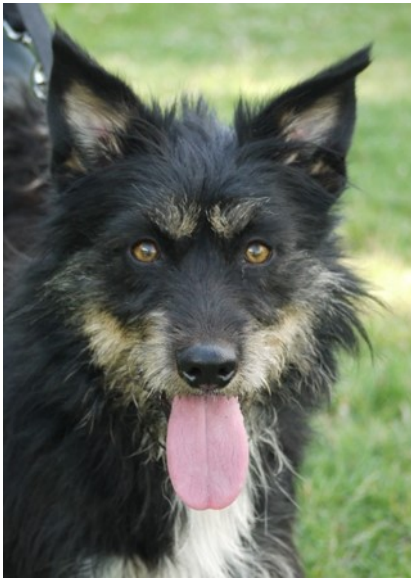
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Update from Appledown Rescue and Rehoming Kennels



During lockdown there has been no rehoming taking place, but abandoned and unwanted dogs still continue to arrive. It's a very challenging time for a small charity that relies on donations and fund-raising, especially as we have not been able to hold our usual events. We need to ask generous dog lovers and supporters to help us get through this difficult time and to continue to provide the high level of care our dogs deserve. It's easy to make a one-off donation of £3 simply by texting APPLE to 70111, or donate via Paypal using the 'DONATE Support a Cause' option and search for Appledown Rescue. Donations by cheque are very welcome too. Thank you from Gypsy, Lola, Mark and all our dogs!

If you are interested in offering a dog a loving home when we reopen, all the relevant information and an application form can be found on our website. Viewings are now by appointment only.

Appledown Rescue & Rehoming Kennels, Harling Road, Eaton Bray, Beds LU6 1QY

01525 220383 (10am-1pm & 2-4 pm)

e-mail: appledown.kennels@btinternet.com

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram!

Hello from **everyone at St Mary's Northchurch** and **we do hope that everyone is safe and well.** Please do remember that we are here to help and support our community. If you or anyone you know is experiencing difficulties during this time, please do get in touch. St Mary's Church runs one of the Northchurch Community Pantry venues and is open daily for donations or if you need help.

- ✂ Our Sunday morning service is at 10am every Sunday morning.
- ✂ Every evening at 10pm, we have a short Night Prayer (Compline) service on Facebook.

Look at our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/stmarynorthchurch> for these services and for more information.

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Contacts for the Newsletter: Currently we are only able to publish online.

Editorial by email to the Editor, Jill Hipson Jill.hipson@live.co.uk.
Copy date is 25th of each month.



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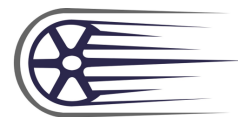
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No words to pray



A candle prayer

God,
Wherever you are,
I have no words to pray.
I am in the darkness,
Aching,
Lost,
In pain.

As I light my candle,
I reach out to you,
For my family and friends,
For the world around me,
For myself.
Give me strength
To face another day.
Shine your light into my
dark places
And help me to know
I am not alone.

Amen

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