

# St Mary's News

June 2020

(during the Coronavirus lockdown)



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## ‘Our diversity is a blessing ...’



‘I cannot breathe’ were some of the final words uttered by George Floyd before he died at the hands of the Minnesota police. As news of his death spread around the world, many people have been sickened and appalled by this terrible event. Sadly, it is by no means an isolated event and America has an unenviable track record regarding the treatment of black and other

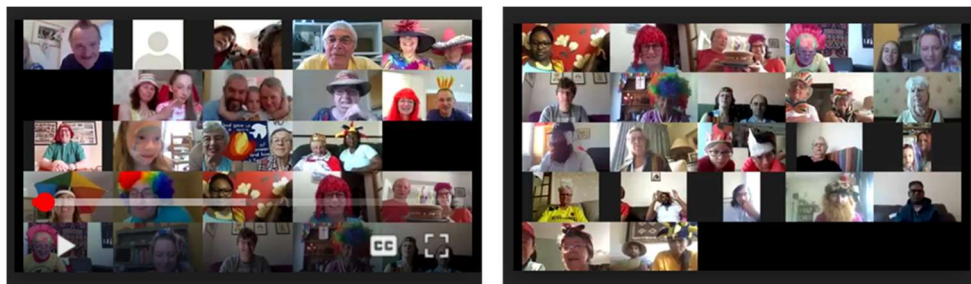
ethnic minority groups. There is without a doubt a disproportionate number of deaths in custody and an alarming number of miscarriages of justice involving African Americans. I would say the problem is endemic and not simply the fault of a few rogue police officers, nor is it simply America’s problem. It is an issue that affects us all. Wherever there is division that leads to inequality and injustice, there is always the probability of civil unrest as seen on the streets of America at the moment. The situation in America cannot be simply swept under the carpet, action needs to be taken. For far too long the world has stood by and watched as the President of the USA has peddled a rhetoric of division and created a culture of us and them. The President has been very vitriolic using words and phrases such as ‘losers’ or ‘fake news’ and in doing so perpetuates a ‘us and them’ mentality and a refusal to listen to any other point of view. It creates barriers (quite literally in some cases) and inevitably leads to conflict and further alienation.

At the time of writing, America is beset by numerous protests. No doubt many of those protests had the intention of being peaceful and dignified, but inevitably in several cases they have led to violent clashes. Understandably memories of the human rights movement of the 1960’s are recalled and the words of Dr Martin Luther King Jr who said: ‘violence is the voice of the unheard’.

Whatever the intentions, the picture of President Trump standing outside St. John’s Episcopal Church holding a large bible only

expatiates the feeling of not being heard and will do nothing to quell the violent protests. Indeed, many Christians have felt affronted by President Trump's actions. Bishop Michael Currey wrote on Twitter, "Trump used a church building and the Holy Bible for partisan political purposes. This was done in a time of deep hurt and pain in our country, and his action did nothing to help us or to heal us. The bible teaches us that 'God is love.' Jesus of Nazareth taught, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' The prophet Micah taught that the Lord requires us to 'do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.'"

If the rhetoric of President Trump (and indeed other world leaders) causes division, even hatred, then the language of Pentecost is one of unity and love. Despite the obvious limitations of lockdown, we still managed to have a wonderful service to celebrate Pentecost, thanks largely to the wonders of Zoom. It was an opportunity to come together and open our homes to share in the celebration of a dramatic event that heralded the birth of the church.



Many of us dressed up for the occasion: wearing outrageous wigs and brightly coloured clothing; celebrating the Holy Spirit coming as fire upon the disciples. The disciples were gathered together as one, united in prayer as they waited for the gift of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit fell on each of the disciples it enabled them to speak in many different languages. Excitedly the disciples went out onto the streets of Jerusalem, praising God and telling of the wonders of Easter and that Jesus was alive. There were many visitors in Jerusalem at that

time, from all over the world. Each could hear the disciples speaking in their own language. It is a clear sign that the Gospel is to be proclaimed in all the world, and that God's love extends to everyone



regardless of the language they speak or the colour of their skin.

One of the many joys of being vicar of St. Mary's is leading a church where so many different nationalities are represented in our congregation. Our diversity is

very much a blessing, with everyone bringing different insights and experiences of God. Like a perfectly made fruit salad, there is a rich variety of different flavours of spirituality and worship, which come together in a beautiful way. Our Pentecost service via Zoom was a great example of this. It was good to see so many coming together and making every effort to celebrate this important festival, their bright clothes and wigs depicting that we really are God's rainbow people; a visible sign of hope and promise. The service began with Lily, one of our youngest members, singing *Come, Holy Spirit, come*. In all the years I have been leading church services, that must be one of the most powerful invocations of the Holy Spirit I have ever witnessed. It is a demonstration that our diversity is not only about nationalities and culture but also age and social backgrounds.

God created the world to be diverse. We are reminded of this in the Genesis story of creation where God created a world teeming with different animals, birds, fish, flowers and plants and declared what he had made as good. There is nothing wrong with difference. It is how we treat difference that is the issue. The language of Pentecost declares we are equally loved and valued by God. We are all made in His image.

In the recount of Pentecost, we watch as St. Peter addresses the crowds - he quotes from the Prophet Joel when he says: 'on the day of

the Lord old men will have dreams and young men will have visions'. Martin Luther King Jr had a dream. It is time for us all to dream. To envision a world where our differences are a cause for celebration. Let us imagine a world where there is no prejudice, no inequality, no poverty, no conflict, where there is justice for all.

Many of us have been drawn closer to God as a result of our experience of lockdown, and we find ourselves imagining what life will be like in the future. The rate of change over recent weeks tells us everything is possible. The language of Pentecost tells us that the Church is in a good position to take the lead. Some of the last words of George Floyd were: 'I can't breathe'. For his sake and for the sake of others may the Holy Spirit breathe new life into God's people in order to galvanise us into making this a better world.



*The Revd Tony Rindl*

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## St Mary's Children and Families

Do you remember that first moment you held your new-born – how you were overcome with a fierce protective love for this perfect, beautiful being you had been entrusted with raising. There was fear too – fear of the mistakes you might make, fear of the world you were bringing this child into. For years, you try your best to hide the ugliness of the world from your innocent child, until one day your child's eyes are opened and there is no more hiding it from them.

I remember the moment I really came to understand what racism really meant. It was the first day of the new school term and I was twelve. For homework, we had been set a show and tell of what we had done over the summer holidays, when one of my friends stood up and started with the words: 'I toyi-toyied (protested) outside Fish Hoek beach'. Her 'show' was to proudly uncover the bruises she had received from the hands of police; to show photos of armoured white



policemen pushing people back violently aggressively raising heavy batons; photos of crowds of angry white people of all ages looking on; a 'Whites only' sign - these images a young black girl's view of apartheid.

Stupidly I gaped at her - why hadn't she just come onto the beach. Then it dawned on me - she couldn't because she was black - somehow, she was different from me - she was black, and I was white.

The truth was that up to that day I had been blind and naïve - suddenly my innocence fell away. Suddenly and painfully I became fully aware of the world I lived in: that some people didn't just live in certain areas and were restricted to certain places because they were poor; that certain demeaning jobs were not reserved for some simply because of their education level; that the comments my father and those around me made towards people who looked different to them weren't just mean words. That day I learnt just what systemic, deep-rooted racialism was. To this day, I cannot understand how a group of people - who call themselves God fearing, practicing Christians - can show such hate towards others based solely because they are perceived to be different in some way. In time though, I would come to understand how I too was prone to discriminating others - how easily we are conditioned by what we see, hear and experience - and how standing by doing nothing perpetuates the problem as much as practicing racism itself.

These memories have resurfaced this week due to what has been happening in the USA - as my daughters come to me with questions -

upset and unable to understand how some people can treat others in such an evil way. I have had to look into their eyes and explain that the world is not a fair place, that while there was much good in the world there was much evil too – that I cannot promise that they or their friends will not encounter prejudice merely because of their sex or the colour of their skin. I have to face down once more that impotency that fills me when I am confronted by it all. And yet is this true – is there nothing that I can do about it all?

James Corden, in his Late Late Show during the night of 1st June, said something very profound: “It is not enough for white people to say: ‘I’m not racist’. This is our problem to solve. How can the black community dismantle a problem they didn’t make?”

Recently as a church we have been doing the ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ initiative – derived from those words we say each time we say the Lord’s Prayer: ‘Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’. For 11 days when we took up the challenge of going deeper with God, to pray for 5 friends or family member we would like to see come to faith, and to pray for God’s kingdom to come on earth. What would God’s kingdom look like on earth? The bible speaks of a place where there is no pain, no mourning, no death but God’s creation as He meant it to be with all people living together in harmony and love. How many times does Jesus entreat us to love one another as God loves us as His children?

Jesus came to bring God’s kingdom on earth, and we, as his disciples, have been commissioned to be a part of this process – to proclaim God’s Good News to the ends of the world and to live out His love in our words, our actions and our very lives. In Matthew 25.35 – 40 Jesus speaks of how when we feed the hungry, clothe the needy, invite in the stranger, visit the sick and imprisoned ‘whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Though in



our own strength we may feel powerless, we are not alone. God calls us to work in partnership with Him – and when we do what is right – what He calls us to do – when we make a stand with our fellow mankind regardless of our differences, we can do powerful things. Let us too be a part of those hope inspiring images of caring for each other; of speaking words of peace against the rhetoric of violence and hatred; of kneeling down with those on the opposition in prayer. Let us bind together to build a world into which we can raise our children without fear.

Cath

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## The Current Affairs Connect Group

### Transgenderism

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*In the last few years, the issue of gender has come to public attention with adults as well as children - often supported by their parents - questioning their assigned (birth) gender. Transgender ideology includes multiple and flexible genders, the use of new personal pronouns and it makes new demands. For those who transition, it is a deeply personal issue. How should Christians respond to the trans people among them?*

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In May, the Current Affairs Group met to discuss *The Transgender Debate: How should Christians respond?*

#### *Background facts*

“Trans” is a general term for people who consider their gender is different from the sex they were assigned. For example, a trans man



is someone who has transitioned from a woman to a man. Trans people experience body dysmorphia and feel uncomfortable, even revolted, living as the gender that they were born with. They usually take serious, life-changing steps to change their gender permanently. This may or may not include surgery. Transgender is independent of sexual orientation.

Although in the past, a few individuals have lived as a gender other than the one they were born with, transgenderism is essentially a modern phenomenon. The first person to transition did so in Germany in a series of operations from 1921-1930.

Transgender is not the same as intersex in which a person is born with uncertain genitalia and a gender may be assigned that may need to be changed surgically at a later stage.

US, Dutch and New Zealand studies on the prevalence of transgenderism from the 1994 to 2016 have varied considerably<sup>1</sup>.

There have been few scientific studies into why people identify with a gender other than their birth sex<sup>2</sup> and these are suggestive rather than conclusive. There have been no long-term studies into the effects of transitioning or de-transitioning.

Transgenderism is no longer classified as a mental disorder in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems. However, several prominent North American psychiatrists, continue to argue that it is a mental disorder.

### *Transgenderism in the UK*

There are no figures collected by the Office for National Statistics on how many people in the UK identify as trans. It is tentatively estimated by the Government Equalities Office that there are

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<sup>1</sup> Between 1 in 3,639 and 1 in 30,000 men; and between 1 in 8,000 and 1 in 100,000 in women.

<sup>2</sup> Two studies on brain structures (1995, 2011) suggest that trans people have the brain structure of their transitioned gender rather than the gender assigned at birth. Two other studies on twins (2012, 2013) suggest there may be genetic causes.

between 250,000 and 500,000 trans people in the UK, between around 0.35% and 0.7% of the population<sup>3</sup>.

Trans people can change their legal gender by meeting the requirements set out in the Gender Recognition Act 2004. Under that Act 4,910 people have changed their gender up to 2018.

Since 2015, the number of UK adults and children referred to gender identity clinics has more than doubled to over 8,000, 75% of whom are assigned female at birth. The reasons for this increase and for the high percentage of female referrals are unknown.<sup>4</sup>

The charity for the support of transgender children, young people and their families is Mermaids<sup>5</sup>.

### *Concerns*

Some feminists, notably Germaine Greer, consider that trans-women are not real women<sup>6</sup>. They have expressed concerns about trans-women who are often physically still men, having access to women's spaces e.g. toilets, changing rooms, female prisons, and women's refuges, pointing to problems such as assault<sup>7</sup>.

In the UK, some are concerned that certain groups such as autistic people and lesbians are effectively put under pressure by the NHS to transition. For example:

- In 2019 Charlie Evans set up the De-transition Advocacy Network<sup>8</sup> to support those uncomfortable with their transition. Most of the trans-people who contact her are born women. They are typically bisexual or lesbian, under 25,

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<sup>3</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm ent\\_data/file/721642/GEO-LGBT-factsheet.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm ent_data/file/721642/GEO-LGBT-factsheet.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Youtube - Detransitioning: Reversing a gender transition - BBC Newsnight – Emily Maitlis interview with Dr Elizabeth van Horne, Tavistock & Portman Clinic (from 17.30 minutes)

<sup>5</sup> <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk>

<sup>6</sup> YouTube - Germaine Greer: Transgender women are 'not women' - BBC Newsnight

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/sep/09/sexual-assaults-in-womens-prison-reignite-debate-over-transgender-inmates-karen-white>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.detransadv.com/>

autistic, had eating disorders, depression etc and were not in a position to give informed consent to transitioning. She considers gender ideology harms lesbians.<sup>9</sup>

- In January 2020, a landmark case to stop the NHS prescribing “experimental” puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to children who wish to undergo gender reassignment had reached the high court.<sup>10</sup> The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (the T&P), which runs the UK’s only gender identity development service for children, is being sued over concerns that young people are being given “experimental treatment” without adequate assessments. The case is being brought by the mother of a 15-year-old autistic girl who is on the waiting list for treatment at the service and also a psychiatric nurse who formerly worked at the Trust. The nurse alleged on BBC’s Radio 4 *Today* that the T&P was willing to offer drugs to children as young as nine. She said that more than 30% of children at the clinic were autistic, had suffered trauma or were confused or socially anxious.
- Some academics have recently complained they are barred from exploring trans issues.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Church of England*

The Church of England is supportive of trans people and has a number of trans clergy. In 2017 the General Synod passed a motion “recognising the need for transgender people to be welcomed and affirmed in their parish church.” And in 2018 the Bishops issued pastoral guidance for clergy which said:

“The Church of England welcomes and encourages the unconditional affirmation of trans people, equally with all

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<sup>9</sup> Youtube - Detransitioning: Reversing a gender transition - BBC Newsnight

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/22/high-court-stop-nhs-giving-puberty-blockers-children>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jan/14/sacked-silenced-academics-say-they-are-blocked-from-exploring-trans-issues>

people, within the body of Christ, and rejoices in the diversity of that body into which all Christians have been baptized by one Spirit.”

“The image of God, in which we are all made, transcends gender, race, and any other characteristic. Our shared identity as followers of Jesus is the unity which makes all one in Christ (Galatians 3.27–28).”

“Everyone’s journey through life is unique. Baptism is the place where we find our true identity in Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

In line with this, St Mary’s website states we are “a place of welcome for everyone regardless of their status, wealth, *gender*, race, sexuality or religion” (*italics* our emphasis).

#### *Christian opposition to transgenderism*

Christians who reject transgenderism argue that God created human beings as male and female (Genesis 1.27) and that rejection of one’s sex at birth is ultimately a sin. They consider that it is unloving to accept a person’s self-identification based on their body dysmorphia. They point out that logically we would have to affirm those with anorexia or those who consider themselves trans-species (e.g. a cat) or otherkin (angel, mythical creature etc). They maintain there is little, if any, science to support transgender ideology and that, on the contrary, transgendered people need drugs and surgical intervention to maintain their new identity, none of which fundamentally changes the chromosomes they were born with. They argue that people who are unhappy with their gender have a mental health issue and can find their identity only in Christ.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/Pastoral%20Guidance-Affirmation-Baptismal-Faith.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> See for example *God and the Transgender Debate: What does the Bible actually say about gender identity* – Andrew T Walker

*What does the Bible say?*

Since the ability to change gender has existed only with modern science, there are no verses in the Bible directly relevant to the trans issue but there are some passages of principle which assist in the wider debate.

As the Bishops' guidance states, humanity is made in the image of God. (Genesis 1.27). This is not a verse about gender since God does not have gender. Rather, it speaks about the dignity and complementarity of humanity. Transgender people must therefore be treated with the same dignity as anyone else.

This is supported by Jesus's command that loving our neighbour (Mark 12.31 based on Leviticus 19.18) is one of the great commandments that underpin the rest of scripture.

Moreover, the New Testament emphasises again and again the radical inclusion of the Kingdom of God. No one is "unclean". Gentiles, women, slaves and eunuchs are all part of the Kingdom (Acts 8.26-40 c.f. Isaiah 56.4-5; Galatians 3.26-38; Colossians 3.11).

It is interesting to note that before the Fall, men and women were happy with their bodies (Genesis 2.25) but the first result of their disobedience was that they were ashamed of their bodies (Genesis 3.7); so there is a sense in which all of us feel a level of discomfort with our bodies. However, in Christ, we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5.17). We become *children* of God, (John 1.12, Romans 8.16, 1 John 3.1) based on our relationship rather than our gender. In that relationship our minds are transformed (Romans 12.1-2) so that our true identity is found in Christ. Nevertheless, we long for the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8.22-23). This will come in the new heaven and earth in our resurrection bodies (1 Corinthians 15.35-49, Philippians 3.20-21) when our gender will cease to have its present relevance (Matthew 22.30) and we will experience wholeness (Revelation 21.4).

## *Reflections*

We noted that the Christian issues around transgenderism were often about changing the body from the gender assigned at birth to another gender through drugs or surgery. A few of us felt this could imply that God had got it wrong first time and were uncomfortable that people went to such extremes. Some considered there are theological difficulties when trans people claim to be of both or neither gender. We all agreed that children and some other vulnerable groups are not able to give informed consent to drugs and surgery.

We all agreed with the position of the Anglican Church that trans people should be welcomed, loved and valued in churches. Several of us knew trans people and were concerned that they are often rejected by churches. One person explained that when her friend transitioned, the church stopped performing the music her friend composed and her friend was forced out.

Some of us believed that individuals have the absolute right to self-identify. Who else can say who I am? But that also means that we may not easily fit with others. Several of us in the group, both men and women, spoke emotionally and with tears about the difficulties we have experienced in being a bit different, and getting others – even Christians – to accept us as the people we are, as the people God made us. This is a deeply sensitive and personal issue that goes to the heart of our identity and so we empathised with trans people. We were passionate that the expectation of society, and often of churches, that men and women should behave according to gender stereotypes, fails to reflect the diversity of people God has created. It is wrong to force others to be something they are not and so restrict them. We are all products of our background and history so, at some level, all of us are uncomfortable with our bodies and/or who we are. Yet we are all loved and accepted by God.

We discussed how far we should go in supporting people's perceptions of themselves. Should we agree with an anorexic's perception that they are fat, with a person who identifies as an

amputee who wants a limb removed, or with a person who identifies as a cat or a unicorn? People who manifest such behaviour often do so as a result of trauma and/or rejection and the key is for the Church to offer them love and acceptance rather than treating them as “other”.

We discussed how we should welcome trans people in St Mary’s. We recognised that we might not even realise some people are trans. In any event, we have no right to judge anyone who comes to us. Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect and be valued for their God given gifts. This applies equally before, during and after a person transitions. It means we shouldn’t ask inappropriate questions or make offensive comments such as:

- Did she used to be a man?
- I can’t tell if they’re a man or a woman. What are they?
- What a shame, she was such a lovely woman!
- Have they had the surgery?
- But what’s their real name? (meaning birth name)
- I’d never have known you’re trans. You’re so pretty.
- You look just like a real man.
- You’re so brave.<sup>14</sup>

People may be curious about other people but in fact we have no right to know about a person’s change of gender unless they choose to tell us and we should regard a shared confidence as a privilege. Further, we should challenge and gently correct those whose words are unloving or offensive.

*The Current Affairs Group*



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<sup>14</sup> *TRANSforming Churches: A practical guide for the inclusion of trans and gender non-conforming people in the Church- Open Church Network*

Join a **Connect Group!**  
and meet up for a virtual gathering  
Contact Andy Roby to find out  
how to join a group that suits you  
[andyroby2001@yahoo.com](mailto:andyroby2001@yahoo.com)

## Invitation to **the Current Affairs Connect Group**

The Current Affairs Connect Group is a place for those interested in current affairs to discuss today's hot topics in a friendly, Christ-centred setting where all opinions are heard. Around 8-12 of us meet on the second Friday of each month at 8pm, currently on Zoom. We are interested in what God has to say in the Bible about contemporary issues. Consequently, we do not approach these from the point of view of traditional left/right ideology. We are frequently surprised by the relevance of the Bible to these issues and we find we are better equipped to answer questions from our non-Christian friends, colleagues and neighbours.

On 12 June we will be discussing *Coronavirus: What, if anything, does God want us to learn?* For details of how to join the Zoom meeting, please contact Marcus Jones by email ([ttekcos@aol.com](mailto:ttekcos@aol.com)).

*Marcus Jones*

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## What is happening in our church?

Well you might guess that a simple answer is little or even nothing. Nevertheless, it seemed worth putting 'pen to paper' to give you a bit of an idea.

Just before the church was locked on the 24th March we took the chance with less going on to get a contractor in to give the whole of the church floor a good clean. To do that we had to move all the chairs out of the way. Afterwards we put back only a few chairs spaced apart by 2 metres. They are still there as you can



see in this photograph. The rest are stacked in piles in the church centre. The idea was to allow people to come in and sit down for private pray while social distancing. Before we can restart services in the church, we may of course be able to open it for private prayer under such conditions.

All use of the church centre has ceased as well, and we do not expect to open the pre-school until September. Those of you who are getting Tony's bi-weekly emails will have seen that despite the current circumstances we have been able to make progress on the church centre roof. Roger Courtney, our architect, and I have been able to organise quite a bit of activity on the scaffolding. The old roofing



material has been removed allowing inspection of the state of the structure underneath. This photograph looks down on the roof above the church centre lounge. Several contractors have made visits in order to prepare quotes for recovering the roof and adding the extra insulation

required. As I write this I have even received 'homework' from our architect – a list of things he wants me to check/photograph next time I go to Tesco Extra and check the church on the way. The other regular visitors are the squirrels. I did hope to get a photograph of them running over the high parts of the scaffolding to go with this article, but they seem to be camera shy.

The next stage is to obtain a Faculty to give permission for the works. This would normally involve displaying a notice on the church door for 28 days but while we are in lock-down the procedure has been changed. The formal notice (see below) is now on the home/welcome page on the church Website - [www.stmaryswatford.org/](http://www.stmaryswatford.org/) - please scroll down to find it. If you have any questions about what is intended, Roger Courtney ([rogerg.courtney@btinternet.com](mailto:rogerg.courtney@btinternet.com)) or I would be pleased to answer them.

*Peter Dean*

## Notice of Renewal of Church Centre Roofs

St Mary's is intending to apply for a Faculty from the diocese to give permission for the following works:  
Renewal of the main roofs of the Church Centre through the installation of a proprietary roofing membrane together with additional insulation.

Copies of relevant plans and documents may be obtained on request from the Church Office ([office@stmaryswatford.org.uk](mailto:office@stmaryswatford.org.uk) or 01923 225189). If you wish to object to any of the works or proposals you should send a communication stating the grounds of your objection to The Diocesan Registrar at St Albans Diocesan Registry, Winckworth Sherwood LLP, Minerva House, 5, Montague Close, London SE1 9BB ([StAlbansRegistry@wslaw.co.uk](mailto:StAlbansRegistry@wslaw.co.uk)) to reach the registrar not later than Tuesday 23rd June 2020.

The communication must include your name and address and state whether you live in the parish and/or your name is entered on the church electoral roll of the parish or any other basis on which you have an interest in the matter.

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## How to plan a lockdown summer holiday!

*(as spotted in an email from Premier Christian Radio)*

Stuck inside this summer? Never fear! We've come up with various ways to make the most of your lockdown holiday.

It's looking increasingly unlikely that those of us living in the UK will be able to enjoy our usual summer holidays this year, so how can we make the most of any time we have at home in the coming months? Here are a few ideas to get you travelling in the right direction....

✓ Recreate a road trip scenario in your front room. Everyone loves a bit of sweaty confinement in close proximity to one another, right? Configure your dining room chairs appropriately, allowing for plenty of unnecessary luggage. Then let the sun blaze in on you and have a good old bicker about directions. Prepare a soundtrack in advance, making sure you pack plenty of water and car snacks for the long journey ahead.

✓ Imagine your home/garden is the Lake District, Venice or New York. Create suitable landmarks to make it more realistic then walk around complaining about the excessive heat and how much everything costs. Don't forget to take plenty of photos. of your trip.

✓ Have a pool party. Drag the old paddling pool out of the garage and dust off the spiders. Slap on some sun cream, lay out your beach towel, dip your feet in the cool water and sip a nice cool beverage as you try to keep your new corona body squished inside last

year's swimwear. Sit out for the full seven minutes before the sun goes behind a cloud and you have to head inside to find jumpers and socks.

✓ Stick the barbecue on and mow the lawn. These have to be the two most iconic smells of summer, and how better to enjoy them than simultaneously? If you've never eaten a hot dog while cutting the grass you've really missed a trick! Make all the neighbours jealous with your delicious meat smells and super neat grass.

✓ Do nothing at all. One of the best things about summer holidays is being able to completely switch off and relax. Let the dishes pile up and give the kids a good book to read. Or better still get the kids to do the dishes while you read a good book.

✓ Eat as many ice-creams as you can. We all know calories don't count during the summer, so be sure to stock up with all your favourites and eat them two at a time, fending off imaginary seagulls and pesky dogs / toddlers as you do so. Ice cream is basically water, so it must be pretty hydrating and if it's fruit-flavoured it may even count as one of your five a day...

✓ Imagine you're at a music festival, complete with party atmosphere, expensive snacks and unspeakably dirty toilets. Crank up the music and have a little boogie while someone sprays beer over you and gives you the odd shoulder barge if you overstep your two inches of space. Refuse to shower for a week and let the dog give you a henna tattoo.

✓ Get your Wimbledon vibe on. Get the tennis rackets out, knock the ball about for a minute or two and have a McEnroe-style meltdown. Then get Cliff Richard to come and serenade you over the fence while you scoff strawberries and cream under an inside-out umbrella.

✓ Once you've done all that you'll be more than happy to head back to work (return road trip ahoy!), glad the summer holiday is over for another year...

You're welcome!

*Submitted by Alison Saunders*



On Friday, 8th May, the UK celebrated 75 years since VE Day (Victory in Europe Day) —the day Germany surrendered and World War 2 in Europe at least came to an end.

Sadly the war in other parts of the world would not end for another 4 months and even then for many soldiers and nurses and others on the front lines in Europe it did not mean that they could suddenly go home, but after almost 6 years of war it was a day to celebrate and hold onto the hope that it was almost over. Over 1 million people took the streets that day in 1945. Some came together for tea parties with neighbours in closed off streets decorated with bunting and flags, eating together at tables and chairs. In towns such as London huge amounts of people crowded the streets so that Trafalgar Square to Buckingham was packed and they sang and danced and hugged until late into the night. I wonder how you would have celebrated had you been there? How did your grandparents or great-grandparents celebrate if they around at that time?



### **Celebrating VE Day 75 years later...**

Due to the COVID-19 virus, it has been difficult to celebrate in the way many had planned, but it didn't stop people from doing so. Thanks to innovative, creative ideas and technology, many found safe ways to remember and celebrate peace in Europe.

At St Mary's Watford we had a virtual tea party with around 32 people joining via zoom over afternoon tea shared memories about VE day and the war. Others attended socially distanced street parties with their neighbours.



The photo on the right is of my dad on the day he went to war on the 26th November 1940 when he was only 19 years old. He was from South Africa and went to fight with the British army in Egypt and Italy and was somewhere in Italy on the 8th May 1945. Like so many who returned from the fighting, he spoke very little about his experiences, but one memory he did share was that of VE day. He said it was the strangest thing—one minute the Italian people were the enemy and the next minute they weren't. Everyone came out into the street and suddenly everyone was friendly and cheering and an Italian man grabbed my dad and his friend's arm and insisted they came to his house for some food.



The photo on the left is of my Uncle Dick as he went off to war. He was captured and was held in a prisoner of war camp. VE Day meant that he was a free man and it is poignant reading the telegram sent to his parents 8 days later, on the 16th May, to say he was safely back in England.  
Cath



I was seven when the war ended, and had lived on our farm in rural Scotland all my life. Though we had been bombed twice during the war, my memories are mostly of schooldays, like marching class by class to the air raid shelter singing, 'Run, rabbit'. Our farm was close to a mining village, which meant the local men were in a reserved occupation and would not be called up, and dad was a farmer, so that applied to him as well. Since nobody had been in the services, there was no joyous celebration, only relief that we were at peace, and we simply went on with life as usual. We had a Home Guard unit, but my dad had the only rifle, which meant some arguments about who 'shot' who among the men. Dad filled in our Anderson shelter, which was nasty, mostly underground, dark, wet and cold. We only used it a couple of times before our local Air Raid Warden came to check it, and laughed at us - 'You live in a farmhouse with thick stone walls and you still choose to sleep in a tin can in the garden!' he joked. From then on we never went back to it. We

schoolchildren had gathered rose hips for the headmaster during the war, which he sold on our behalf and bought a projector that could show movies in our gym hall: I remember seeing several old black and white movies.

Christine



Claude is 91 and remembers travelling from Somerset by train with his mother to Paddington. He remembers being swept along by the crowd into the mall from Trafalgar Square and ended up very near the railings in front of Buckingham Palace. He can still hear the singing and remembers the dancing particularly by the USA soldiers. He can visualise the King and Queen coming out onto the balcony and then being joined by Winston Churchill and lots of cheering and flag waving. They then walked back to Trafalgar Square where the crowds were immense but they then went into Westminster Abbey and knelt down and gave thanks for the Peace that had come. Following this they returned to Paddington and went home. No evening party for them but doubtless there were many going on round the country.



Elizabeth was 8 years old at the time. She was living in Glasgow and on that day was with her family by the sea. The local hill Ailsa Craig had a light shining from the top which they understood meant that the war was over. They went home and took their gas marks to the top floor of their tall house and threw them out of the window!!!

During the war years I spent most of my time as a young engineer in the Naval Aircraft Department of the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough in Hampshire. My duties during this period were conducting of commissioning trials of aircraft and flight deck machinery on aircraft carriers of the Royal Navy, making 46 visits to 31 aircraft carriers. At the time of VE Day I was on board HMS Glory in the River Clyde. On the morning of the 8th May we sailed from Tail-o'-the-Bank (off Greenock) for trials at the mouth of the Clyde. That evening on return to our anchorage I saw HMS Pretoria Castle (an aircraft carrier converted from one of the Union Castle liners) already 'dressed overall' - which means it had every flag on ship showing—and bedecked with fairy lights from the masthead to the deck, and silhouetted against them were a very large black bowler hat and a tightly rolled umbrella. At that time these were symbols of the typical city gent, indicating immediate demobilisation. A signal was issued by the Admiral-Superintendent of the area saying that star-shells will not be used in celebration. (These were very large shells fired from guns into the sky to floodlight large areas of the sea and ships which, when fired, created large dangerous bits of shrapnel.) So all the ships in that area had all their lights showing and a few rockets for firework displays instead.



Coming back home a couple of days later it was good to see all the street lights working and all the blackout screens in the houses removed. There were no street parties or celebrations at home; remember, that the country was still in the depths of rationing. Geoff

Jane was 11 on VE Day. She remembers having to wind up the radio's battery to listen to the announcement of VE Day. Later that day, she went to Buckingham Palace with a friend and her parents and remembers the cheering and the royals and Prime Minister coming out on the balcony. 'There was no room

Olive remembers the relief that she would not have to ever worry about the air raid siren going off again and needing to go outside into the cold to hide in the air raid shelter.

She does remember her sister Vera, who was a very upright young woman was at college at the time and bunked lectures that day to go celebrate with her friends on the beach.

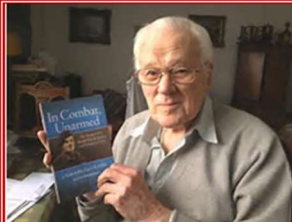
Olive had missed being conscripted by only a few months and ended up volunteering for the auxiliary fire service as a warden instead. Once a month she would go on duty at from 8pm to 6.30am and would spend her time making cups of tea for the firefighters and answering the phone if there was any emergencies. If they got some sleep it was on bunkbeds. Then the next morning she would cycle home and put in a day's work. She still has her auxiliary hat somewhere. She remembers the unexploded bomb found in Cassionbury Park and a landmine in Balmoral Road.

for dancing there,' she said! Afterwards she remembers the glue and sticky paper being taken off the train windows which had been put on to prevent shattering.

Many people were too young 75 years ago to remember much except for vague memories of firework displays or tea parties with neighbours in the street with lots of bunting and flags. As there was still rationing and many foods such as flour, eggs and sugar were scarce, many could not make cakes.

Barbara was 11 years old on VE Day and she remembers going to the window before bedtime and wondering what peace was like —she had been five when the war broke

David Brown's father, George Henry Brown was a Lance-Corporal during WW2. He received the Distinguished Conduct Medal, which was only given out for extremely high levels of bravery, during his time in the Desert Rats during the Desert Campaign. He and David's mother were married seven days before VE Day - he was only given a 48 hour pass but tried to extend his leave a bit and the Red Caps came to for him. His mother remembered celebrating VE Day very quietly in London, listening to it all on the radio as she missed her husband. David was born 9 months later.



Sue Martin's godfather and uncle Keith Killby—who a pacifist and didn't want to carry arms—joined the SAS as an army medic. He was taken captive and put into an Italian prisoner of war camp in July 1943. Three weeks later Killby and 2000 other PoW's escaped through a hole made in a wall. Italy had just made peace and this group of men joined the 30,000 Allied prisoners of war who went on the run from the encroaching German army in the Italian countryside. They were fed and sheltered by ordinary Italians, many of whom were poor farmers who shared the little they had and who defied the threat of being shot for helping the escapees—slivers of soap was all he could give in repayment. Kilby never forgot the assistance the Italian people provided him and 40 years later he created 'The Monte San Martino Trust' - born out of the belief that fostering understanding of other countries was the best way to promote peace, the trust funded young Italian's to study English for a month at language schools in England. Many of the 600 students who benefited from this scheme were descendants of those Italians who had helped Kilby and his comrades. His work was recognised by an OBE in 2001 and an Italian honour. Those he helped in turn honoured him and at the very moment that he died, in London on the 7th September 2018 aged 102, 90 supporters were raising a cheer of his charity were raising three cheers to him in Fontanellato, near Parma.

Mary remembers her mother's intrepid spirit as at aged 17 she boarded first a train from Rhodesia to Port Elizabeth in South Africa and then a troopship, filled with South African soldiers, on her way to Britain to do a course of study. She would go on to spend the whole five years of the war studying in Britain and would spend her holidays in Devon as a Land Girl. She remembers her mother recounting how she was working during hay time when one day, as she stood on the back of a horse-drawn cart pitch fork in hand, a German plane, on its way back from a bombing run flew over head. It came back so low that she could see the pilot in his cockpit. He began to shoot at her and it was only the horse bolting, making her fall off the cart, that saved her life.



Land Girls during hay season -  
not Mary's mother

Margaret's mum—Jean Machin—attended a VE Day street party. She has a photo of herself dressed as nurse and the date on the back is 1st Sept. 1945 and Jean was three years old. She thinks the street parties continued well after VE Day, unless some people waited until after VJ Day. They lived in Dover Way, Croxley Green. At least Jean's mother would have been able to join in with this party, having been in the hospital (or nursing home) on 8th May 1945 after giving birth to Jean's brother on 2nd May 1945. Apparently she was quite disappointed at missing all the excitement on 8th May!



## Beatitudes for a Pandemic

**Blessed** are those who stay indoors for they have protected others.

**Blessed** are the unemployed and the self-employed, for their need of God is great.

**Blessed** are the corner shopkeepers, for they are the purveyors of scarce things.

**Blessed** are the delivery drivers and the postal workers, for they are the bringers of essential things.

**Blessed** are the hospital workers; the ambulance crews, the doctors, the nurses, the care assistants, and the cleaners, for they stand between us and the grave, and the Kingdom of Heaven is surely theirs.

**Blessed** are the checkout workers, for they have patience and fortitude in the face of overwork and frustration.

**Blessed** are the refuse collectors, for they will see God despite the mountains of waste.

**Blessed** are the teachers, for they remain steadfast and constant in disturbing times.

**Blessed** are the church workers; the deacons, priests and bishops, for they are a comforting presence in a hurting world as they continue to signpost towards God.

**Blessed** are the single parents, for they are coping alone with their responsibilities and there is no respite.

**Blessed** are those who are alone, for they are children of God and with Him they will never be lonely.

**Blessed** are the bereaved, for whom the worst has already happened. They shall be comforted.

**Blessed** are those who are isolated with their abusers, for one day – we pray - they will know safety.



Blessed are all during this time who have pure hearts; all who still hunger and thirst for justice; all who work for peace and who model mercy. May you know comfort. May you know calm. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.

by Jayne Manfredi @TheWomanfredi



## Services

We are sorry that due to the Government restrictions the church building will remain closed until further notice.

But we are not just a building and so we will continue to pray, worship and care for each other from our homes and in new ways during this difficult time.

### Sunday

10.30 am Morning Service via Zoom  
4.00 pm KidsChurch via Zoom  
5.30 pm Reflection on Facebook

### Wednesday

12.30 pm Reflection on Facebook

### Monday to Saturday

Morning Prayer on the church website

Please keep up to date with what is on offer via our Facebook page or the website [www.stmaryswatford.org](http://www.stmaryswatford.org)

## Who's Who:

*(They all continue to be available via the phone or online)*

### Vicar:

The Revd Tony Rindl | 225189 / 07792 505480  
tonyrindl.stmaryswatford@gmail.com

### Curate:

The Revd Joshua Brocklesby | 07764 738596  
jbrocklesby.stmaryswatford@gmail.com

### Churchwardens:

Alison Saunders (244390)  
Peter Dean (07876 154387)

### Children & Families Worker:

Cath Da Costa (07961 564385)  
familyworker.stmaryswatford@gmail.com

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