

St Mary's News

May 2020

(during the Coronavirus lockdown)



New Life is to Come - the Revd Tony Rindl

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New Life is to Come

Understandably we often find ourselves thinking about what life will be like once lockdown is over. The experts warn us this is likely to be several months away, and it may be even longer before we return to anything like what we consider normal life. I think it will be a gradual return with restrictions slowly lifting one by one. If you are like me and following medical advice to self-isolate for at least 12 weeks, you will be longing for that moment when we are told it is safe to leave our homes.

Many of us are enjoying our gardens and take pleasure in the wildlife that wanders in. Various birds visit mine on a regular basis. The robin



is my favourite and is quite happy to fly around even when I do my daily walk. I have also been visited by a beautiful young fox and much to my delight early on Sunday morning it appeared at the bottom of the garden accompanied by a tiny fox cub. I suspect it may have been its first outing into the big wide world. I

watched as this tiny cub surveyed in wonder the expanse of my garden, until an ever-watchful mum ushered it back into the safety of the den. I wonder if my first venture back into the big wide world will have me blinking and staring as I rediscover all those things that before I would have taken for granted.

For many of us the confinement of lockdown has been an opportunity to take stock and reflect on life. It has helped us to reassess our priorities and to appreciate what we truly value in life, in particular our families and friends. I am sure many of us will approach life differently as a result. If you are anything like me, you will have begun to draw up a wish list of all the things you will do when the restrictions

have been lifted and we regain the freedom we so often took for granted.

If you have followed my recent sermons and other reflections, which can be found on the website, you will know that I have taken a keen interest in the passages in the bible that see God's people imprisoned, or confined in some way, or where normal way of life has been curtailed. I have spoken on stories such as Jonah in the whale and Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt. The story of Joseph in particular reminds us that our story very often forms only a small part of God's bigger story. Yet without our story the bigger story remains incomplete. Long before Joseph was imprisoned, God spoke to his great grandfather Abraham. Even though Abraham and his wife Sarah were of a great age, God promised that from his offspring a new nation would emerge which would be a blessing to the whole world. We know that Abraham had a son Isaac and that Isaac in turn had a two sons Esau and Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons, one of them was Joseph. If Joseph had not been imprisoned, his gift of interpreting dreams would not have been recognised by Pharaoh and Joseph would not have been appointed to high office in Egypt. His brothers would not have settled in Egypt and their offspring would not have followed Moses to the Promised Land. The formation of Israel happened in part because Joseph was imprisoned. It is from the story of Israel that a new story emerges, that of Jesus. It is Jesus's 'Good News' that continues to transform the world today.



We might argue that new life always comes from some form of confinement. It is from the confinement of the mother's womb that a child is born. It was from the confinement of the tomb that first Easter Sunday that Jesus was resurrected - the birth of a new creation.



The egg, associated as it is to Easter, is a powerful symbol of new life in the image of the chick breaking out from the confines of the eggshell.

We at St Mary's have already experienced the new life that can come after a period of confinement and restriction and the lessons we learnt then bring us hope and reassurance at this present time. The refurbishment of the church building, between January 2018 and Easter 2019, saw us confined to the church centre and constrained by what we could do. Yet rather than being a negative experience, it proved to be a positive time where we saw some noticeable growth in the size of our congregation. I think the time we spent worshipping in the church centre helped us to recognise what the essentials to genuine Christian worship are. It also taught us much about what it means to join together in fellowship, working together for a common purpose. There was a real sense of God being in the mix, working with us, preparing us for our return to a newly refurbished church. I do not think any of us will ever forget the wow factor we felt that wonderful Sunday when we finally emerged from the church centre and stepped back into the church.

Whether it is like the chick breaking out of the eggshell, or the fox cub staring at this big wide world having emerged from the den for the first time, or a congregation returning to worship in their spiritual home, we are expectant and hopeful of life after Coronavirus. This idea of emerging back into being fully alive, gaining a real zest of life and embracing the hope which lies at the heart of our regained freedom is further illustrated in St. John's retelling of the raising of Lazarus. We see it in that amazing moment when Lazarus, who had died, is commanded by Jesus to come out of the grave. We see it as the Gospel writer paints the remarkable picture of Lazarus staggering out of the tomb and Jesus telling an astonished crowd to remove the grave

clothes and set him free. We hope very much that before long we can leave the grave of lockdown, and indeed be set free from the grave clothes that is the fear of Coronavirus. The raising of Lazarus was done to reveal the glory of God. The glory of God is also revealed in the life and freedom he gives us.

How we long for the life and freedom we knew before the lockdown – but that life still has constraints. The bible speaks of a freedom greater than even this – greater than any we have ever known or experienced. On Thursday 21st May it is Ascension Day when we celebrate the risen Jesus ascending to heaven. St John tells us how Jesus promised that He has gone to prepare a place in heaven for any who trust and believe in Him. Heaven is a state of existence which is not limited by the confines of earthly life as we know it, constrained by time and space, but is one that offers a glorious everlasting life surrounded by God's presence and love, so truly freeing that our human minds cannot conceive it.



One day coronavirus will be over, and we will discover a new sense of life. We look forward to that day with joyful expectation - and yet as Christians our true joy lies beyond even that horizon – to the life and freedom that is offered to each one of us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Revd Tony Rindl



PCC Report

The Meeting of Parishioners (to elect the churchwardens) and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting were scheduled to take place in April. Obviously, due to the current situation they could not take place. The Diocesan Office issued the following statement:

In the light of the national situation relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Bishop Alan has exercised his powers contained in the Churchwardens Measure 2001 and the Church Representation Rules to allow parishes more time to hold a meeting of parishioners, and their APCM, and to hold the associated elections.

For 2020, the time for holding a meeting of parishioners to choose churchwardens is extended until 31 October (instead of 31 May). Similarly, the period for holding an annual meeting of parishioners (APCM) is extended to 31 October.

Churchwardens who were chosen in 2019 continue to hold office until 31 January 2021 unless their successors are admitted to office before that.

The term of office of current representatives of the laity on deanery synods is extended until 30 November. As a result, it will be the current members of the houses of laity of deanery synods who will comprise the electorate for the House of Laity of the General Synod in elections to the General Synod this year.

The term of office of representatives of the laity on parochial church councils is also extended. A representative of the laity whose term of office was due to expire this year will continue in office until the end of the deferred APCM.

PCCs should still aim to finalise the 2019/20 reports that they would have presented to the APCM and should publish them and send copies to the DBF by the end of June 2020.

You will be informed as soon as a new date for the meetings is set.

The Current Affairs **Connect Group**

Marcus Jones writes:

Our Current Affairs Connect did not meet in April as it was Easter. We are having a Zoom Current Affairs Connect on Friday 1st May so I should have an article next month.

The Current Affairs Group

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



Mrs Joan Moulton

Joan was an active member of St Mary's for many years. She, and her sister Gwen (Batute) were always very willing to help in any area of church life, so at any function, there they were, manning a cake stall, making tea, doing so many of the jobs that needed to be done. Joan was a member of the Mothers' Union, a member of a Home Group held at Gwen's house and of a number of organisations in the church. One job which she carried out very conscientiously was to arrange the changing of the frontal on the pulpit and the coloured cloth on the Lord's Table and was always very keen to tell the churchwardens when the liturgical season was changing and there was work to be done. She had worked as a domestic supervisor in Watford General Hospital and was very keen for everything to be done to a high standard.

When the previous group of flower arrangers had to retire from that work, she took on the job, in a triumvirate with Stella Bullimore and the late Margaret Osborn and they maintained the high standard of St Mary's floral displays. Many were the trips to specialist places such as Crews Hill to get the flowers needed for the big festivals. Following her late husband's military service, Joan was a strong supporter of the Royal British Legion and took a particular pride in her display for Remembrance Sunday. She loved St Mary's and was very keen that it should look at its best. Woe betide the Vicar, administrator and churchwardens if the cleaning wasn't being done as it should be!

As the years went on and her arthritis developed, she couldn't do all she would have liked to but still took a caring interest in the members of the church whom she had known for so many years. She had brought up her daughter Jane and son Roy in St Mary's and would speak often of her wider family. She was very proud when Roy married Cathryn and moved to Portsmouth where they became involved in the life of the Cathedral. She took great delight in telling us of the development of their daughter Poppy in her early years, particularly as Roy and Cathryn had chosen Joan as one of her middle names.

Eventually Joan found it progressively more difficult to care for herself and a couple of years ago moved to Clacton to share a house with her granddaughter Gillian. I visited her there and she was well looked after in the company of several cats with that part of her family nearby and a view of the garden which was her delight. She was admitted to hospital in March 2020 and went to be with her Lord on 25 April, leaving happy memories of a devoted and hard-working member of St Mary's.

John Way



St Mary's Children and Families

I don't know about you but staying in during these COVID times with your children can sometimes feel like some form of punishment, like house arrest. Don't get me wrong, with the gentler-paced lifestyle my daughters and I are spending some amazing quality time together – doing exercise videos, baking, cooking, playing board games and movie nights - but the rest of the time... It doesn't matter that I can competently teach a class of 30 children or control an assembly hall of 420 children, when I am faced with my own flesh-and-blood teenager who doesn't fancy doing her home-learning I suddenly feel totally de-skilled.

As I listen to parents I am confronted by just how stressful and often out of our comfort zones things have pushed us. Not surprising as we suddenly find ourselves trying to work at home around the kids, rapidly learning how to use new technologies and grapple with the uncertainty of changing roles at work or needing to find innovative ways of doing things. It is one thing to understand that our children have also been thrown into a new confusing, uncertain world where it is no wonder they are sometimes grumpy and fractious, it is a whole different ball game trying to figure out how to manage it all. Just how does one face your children's sense of loss at not seeing friends or maybe another parent; the loss of routines and the activities they love



like going to the park; the disappointment of not celebrating birthdays as planned; the sense of mourning that they may not finish the end of primary or secondary schooling and may miss out on those celebrations which make such transitions

so special such as proms and concerts.

While I may complain about my teens, I am grateful that they are older and more independent. My thoughts are with those of you with younger children, especially those who are struggling to understand what is going on. Then there is the inevitable fear if someone close to your family gets ill or the loss if someone close dies. Just how are we supposed to handle it all? I don't have all of the answers, but here are a few things my daughters and I have tried and seem to work:

Give yourself a break

Whatever happened today – whether it was a good day or one in which you felt you were in a running battle with your children – if you have reached the end of the day with everyone alive you survived, you did a good job! We have all had days when our children did not get dressed, ate chocolate cake for breakfast or had to have three baths because they ended in some muck or other. They may not have done their home-school for the day, but take heart in knowing your child learnt life-skills today if nothing else. Remember the three mantras of parenting are: choosing your battles, tomorrow is another day and forgiveness by bedtime (that is both for your little monkey and yourself!).



Set a routine

Having teenagers, it is so easy to let things go a bit and suddenly they are getting up at midday, on their various gadgets all day and then unable to sleep at night. It took me a very long time to realise the power of having routines, they give your child a sense of security and you a sense of control. They also ensure against those triggers which can cause difficult behaviour – hunger, tiredness and over stimulation. If your child is younger try to stick to your pre-Covid routine wherever possible – sticking to set wake-up times, ‘school times’, mealtimes and

bedtimes, etc. Ensure that there are lots of fun activities included, maybe craft sessions in the afternoons, a weekly family movie night, boardgame night, etc. I will be honest this can be difficult, but an honest conversation with your teen about mental health can help and a jointly agreed timetable where they can take on extra responsibilities, particularly if they get some sort of payment for these, can help give them the sense of control and affirmation the crave.

Keeping contact



One of the hardest things we are finding is the loss of intimacy with those close to us which we unwittingly rely on and the stretching of the bonds of relationships - whether parents, grandparents, friends or partners. As we enter the seventh week of staying at

home there is no denying it is getting difficult. Then think of those we are trying to protect most. Many of our elderly would have experienced the last world war and faced years of separation with none of the communication and social media options we can enjoy today.

While for safeguarding reasons social media platforms are only supposed to be accessed by older youth (Zoom for example should only be used independently by those 16 years and older) this doesn't mean you can't set up a session and supervise your children while on it. I have heard of some lovely ideas like Sunday lunches and parties using Zoom or Netflix Parties – even schools are using it as a way for children to make contact with friends and teachers. For those of us who prefer boardgames to video games, there is also a range of online versions of games, such as chess or Othello to play with friends and family in different places. We can rediscover, in my daughter's words,

'old fashioned' methods such as using the postal system. The girls have been introduced to the joys of receiving letters and parcels in the post.

Zoom, Facebook and email have been invaluable in St Mary's attempt to support families and children: there is our Sunday 4pm KidsChurch services with stories, songs and space for children to connect with those they know; and we have our Youth Quiz on Thursdays at 6pm. We are also emailing out a weekly newsletter packed with a bible story, craft and activities. For safeguarding reasons, these services need to be accessed by a parent but if you are not already accessing these then please do contact me and I will let you know how.

Dealing with your child's fears, worries and maybe even anger...

It is vital for your child to have a space where they can express and deal with how they are feeling. So often I come across children who inaccurately think that anger and other negative emotions are 'bad' and we need to teach our children that emotions are natural. Admittedly we need to teach them that how we react or act out our emotions may not always be the best way - for example anger does not excuse violent reactions.

Reassure your child that it is normal to feel scared and anxious and maybe even angry as we live under COVID 19. Give them time in which they can express what they are feeling. You know your child best so approach this in a way which will make your child feel most comfortable - I have one child who likes to sit down and have a good chat and another for whom such a discussion feels threatening, so we take time out to bake together and where she feels happier opening up and speaking to me. It may be



your child finds it easier to speak to someone else – try not to feel threatened by this as usually they are concerned about speaking to you and don't want to worry you.



Ensure they have the real facts about COVID-19. This might sound obvious, but I am surprised by how many misconceptions the children in my class have which they have gathered from the internet and each other and causes them to

worry. Worry isn't helpful and often comes when we overthink how things might be, rather than facing what is. It is important we help our children to find healthy ways to deal with the situation. One way could be to empower your children by giving them practical things to do, for example, discuss how they can keep themselves and others safe e.g. by washing their hands.

There are many ways we can deal with strong emotions such as anxiety and worry, but at the end of the day you need to find the way that works best for your child. If your child is in KS2 or above, you may find they have already practiced some calming techniques in their PSHE classes. Here are just some techniques you could try with your child:

- **Time-out:** This is where you physically give your child a safe space where they can process and act out their feelings. This could be a corner in the house (some children like a timer), their bedrooms (although this can be counterproductive if they then associate their room with difficult emotions), or outside in the garden or going for a walk.
- **Visualisation:** In a way this is a mental version of time-out where your child focusses on a mental or actual picture of

something they feel happy about – get them to focus on what the image conjures e.g. smells, sounds, feelings, etc

- **Breathing / relaxation techniques:** When we are anxious or scared, we tend to breath faster, our heart beats faster and experience a spike in hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. In essence we trigger our flight or fight response. We can trick our body that everything is okay and counter these responses by slowing our breathing by taking a deep breath holding it for as long as we can and then breathing out slowly – for very young children I pretend to blow up a balloon. Practicing relaxation techniques can help.
- **Exercise:** Doing something physical can be a quick and successful way of getting your child to relax and distract them from what is worrying them, especially for boys.
- **Face the fear directly:** For some people thinking about something and then laying it aside can help. This could be through an activity such as writing it down and crumpling the piece of paper up, or holding a stone in your hand while thinking about your fear and then dropping it into a bowl of water or my favourite dropping an effervescent tablet e.g. a vitamin C tablet into some water and think about the feelings dissolving with the tablet (obvious care needs to be taken with younger children that they don't accidentally eat the tablet).
- **For more ideas and activities** to use with your children in trying to help your child cope with what they are feeling and with the COVID crisis, we have put a free set of materials



provided by David C Cook onto our website. Please do contact me if you would like me to email the material to you.

- **Most importantly - go to God with it:** As Christians we are in the enviable position of knowing we can always turn to our loving, relational and comforting God with everything. God calls us to place our burdens onto Him. Speak to your child about how you have found prayer and reading your bible works. You might like to share the following bible verses with your children: Learning what to do with worry: see Matthew 6:25-27, 34; Philippians 4:6-7 and for how to release our fears see 1 Peter 5:7. By teaching our



children to identify and understand what they are worrying about, to give their worries to God and to replace their negative thoughts with God's truth, you are giving your child powerful, life-skills in dealing with worry, anxiety and other powerful emotions.

What to do if your family experiences serious illness or a death of a loved one:

Many of the techniques mentioned in the previous section will work here too. Serious illness within a family can cause members of the family trauma. Whether it is trauma or grief, it is important that your child is able to work through their experiences and feelings, which is difficult because each person processes these in different ways and in different timescales. The resource we have put up on the website produced by David C Cook has sections on this too.

A powerful way we can help our children is by showing our own grief. In this way you are encouraging your child to express theirs too. Spend

as much time as possible helping your child to show their feelings openly – their sadness, anger and anxiety will come out over time and at unexpected times. It is usual for children to sometimes 'forget' and believe the person is still alive and may feel they are to blame in some way. In the event of a death, find ways for your child to celebrate and remember the person who has passed and, unless very young, talk to your child at an appropriate level about what will happen at the funeral even if they don't attend.

Finally, know that Tony, Josh and I are here if you need anything - do phone or email us if there is any way we can help you. While we are not trained counsellors, we are good listeners and will willingly pray with you. Know that we continue to think and pray for you and your family during this time.

God bless you and keep you safe,

Cath

(07961564382 /

familyworker.stmaryswatford@gmail.com)



Tony writes:

Finally, be assured of my prayers. At the end of March, I committed to praying for each one of you and I developed what I think is quite an ingenious way of doing it. I am one of those considered at greatest risk of serious illness and have been advised to stay at home for 12 weeks. Undeterred I calculated my garden is 30m long and if I walk up and down the garden 80 times this will be 4800m or approximately 3 miles. (So my asthma nurse should be pleased with me!) I have 80 markers which I drop into a bucket to help me count. Each marker represents a member of the church family or household and so as I go up and down the garden, I will be praying for you.

I continue to do my daily exercise of walking up and down my garden 80 times and as I do so I remember you all in my prayers.

‘Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my **path.**’

Psalm 119:105



Post script: The keen gardeners need to know I took this photo just before I mowed the lawn, for maximum effect!

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

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
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Churchwardens:

Alison Saunders (244390)
Peter Dean (07876 154387)

Children & Families Worker:

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