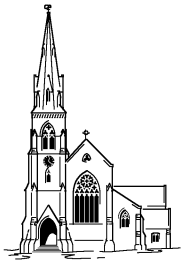
February 2021

St John's Church

Welcoming - Worshipping - Loving - Growing



Jottings

Another Lockdown. Another Challenge. Another Opportunity.

In the Lockdown of Spring 2020 – churches were not allowed to open. In this lockdown the decision as to whether or not to open was down to local church leaders. With rates on the rise, and the added risks of a more contagious new variant, the clergy team here all agreed that closing was our safest and most pastoral option. I know this will have come as a disappointment to some and a relief to others. The online services continue but for those of you are not online I appreciate that this is another hard season to go through. We will, of course, not stay closed for any longer than feels right and necessary and we'll keep assessing the situation as we go.

Another lockdown presents us with another challenging time but also another opportunity to go deeper with God. He calls us to draw near and I hope that we can once again use this time to press into personal prayer and devotion.

I'm also sure that God still wants to use this season as a time of preparation. The Renewal Project has been slowed down by Coronavirus but it is still ticking along in the background and real progress has been made in recent months. Preparing our church buildings for a future of renewed mission and ministry feels like a helpful metaphor for what God is calling us – His people – to do. God has plans for our church – plans to bless us and plans for us to be a blessing. In Sept 2019, when the Renewal Project was launched, we also shared a new mission statement that the church leadership team had spent time praying, thinking and talking about. This can be summarised as: 'to share the Gospel clearly and demonstrate God's love generously.'

We can do this now – and we are doing it now. Many are involved in pastoral care – providing meals, phone calls, practical care and encouragement. Our online services are also an opportunity to share the Gospel with new people.

But now is also the time to dream and prayerfully ask God, *'What have you got in store for us? What are you calling us to do?' How can we be ready for the new things you are doing and the new things you are calling us to do?*

I encourage each and every one of you take on these questions as we together look for what God is doing now and what He is leading us into.

Two new things are coming up in Lent. On Sundays we are going to do a series called 'Saying Yes to Life.' It's a series all about appreciating, understanding and loving God's world. I hope it will be really good for us and lead us into a deeper appreciation for creation and increase our commitment to creation care. We are also doing a midweek course called 'Life Explored' – a seven session course on the basics of Christianity. Lockdown means that these courses will both be Online. Those of you on social media/email will see more info about these things soon. For those not online – please pray for these two courses – that God will use them both to draw people in and lead us all forward.

Stay safe, stay in touch and stay close to the one who knows you best and loves you most.

God bless

Tom

News and prayer requests from David and Shelley Stokes

David and Shelley are preparing to leave Juarez in Argentina. After so many years it is going to be very hard for them to leave. They have asked that we pray for God to guide their plans.

Juarez is in lockdown until 29th January as recently there have been 200 cases of Covid. David and Shelley are clearing their house and saying their goodbyes to their church family. They will attempt to travel to Salta in early February. Once there they are hoping to book their flights for late February. On their arrival in U.K. they are planning to quarantine in their daughter's flat in Oxford.

Bishop Nick (diocesan Bishop of Northern Argentina, overseeing 150 Anglican churches in rural and urban contexts) and Catherine, who coordinates the work of AMARE, have needed to spend 10 months in the UK and would like to return to Argentina as soon as possible. They have been advised to stay until they can be vaccinated.

Please also pray for the Wichi community who are finding it hard to understand why people are being taken away and put in quarantine. They are suspicious of the motivation of the authorities. Please pray for calm. If it is advisable David and Shelley would like to be able to say their farewells to the Wichi communities in Salta Province before they return to the U.K. Please pray for their protection.

Thank you in advance for your prayers.
Jill Flux Mission Co-ordinator

News from Pat Blanchard, Link Missionary

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

Plans, what are they! I expect all our plans have taken a different turn, especially over Christmas. My trip isn't as expected! Half way through my obligatory 14 day isolation the UK government announced another lockdown and restrictions continued. Plans to visit and reconnect haven't materialised.

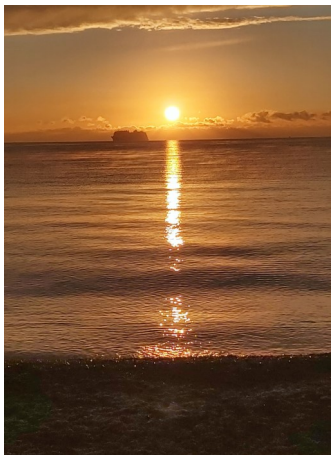
Political upheaval in Peru in November saw a new president installed. Vaccinations ordered were invalidated and plans to start vaccinating there may not begin until September.

Preaching in a link church on December 6th, with a small congregation I realised that it was the first time since mid March that I was preaching to real people. Since Peru lockdowns I'd been recording sermons, preaching through the telephone and still continued to lead Shalom services from here via WhatsApp.

God has plans and I thank Him for His timing and provision. In early January I realised it wasn't possible to return to Peru as planned due to travel restrictions. In that same week the Peruvian Bishop called and proposed to send newly ordained Deacon, Raoul, to assist me. I know him well. He has a servant heart and is keen on evangelism and youth. He is a technology buff (hoping he can tweak people's telephone/internet).

He is on the health committee and involved in the protocol for reopening churches. However, considering the vulnerability of the Shalom congregation, reopening isn't feasible. I'm hoping Raoul can organise Bible study and one to one discipleship, especially with the men. The Shalom project remains closed. Some families continue working remotely with ex staff.

I have no return date as yet but await God's plans to be revealed.



The first Sunrise of 2021.

Here is a photo I took on New Year's Day.

It reminded me of the beauty of God and the hope that comes with new beginnings.

Jos Bailey

Anni Douglas is making lots of marmalade to sell for funds for Hope House. She needs more jars please - not too big!

She will be selling small jars for £1, £2 for medium and £3 for large.

Please email Anni annidouglas@gmail.com if you would like to buy some marmalade or if you have any jars.

Congratulations to Jill and Tony Flux

On January 2nd Tony and I gave thanks for 50 years of happy marriage. We were married at St. George's Church, Fordington, Dorchester. After living away from Dorset for a while we moved back to Weymouth in 1977. We feel blessed to be living near our 3 children and 7 grandchildren.

Jill Flux

Hope

As the front door shuts I feel free -
Which way to walk?
Down to the sea or up in the muddy fields?
As I draw closer I hear the waves splashing on the shore.
I see turnstones flicking over pebbles searching for food.
Passing Bowleaze and up to Redcliff Point
Redundant ships look majestic.
Every time up here I marvel at the scenery -
God's incredible creation.
Who can deny Him?
In Him there is hope.
May there be hope for the future with less haste -
More caring for those in need -
Time for each other and greetings with visible smiles and hugs -
When this distressing virus is no more.

(photographed early December near Redcliff)

Linda Miles

World Day of Prayer

It is very likely that the World Day of Prayer on March 5th will be cancelled due to Covid, as the local committee members are of a vulnerable age, and it's likely that churches will not be fully open at that time. However, I have many service booklets which I could give to people if they would like to follow the service individually. In each booklet there is an envelope for donations, as National Office relies on this income yearly. If interested, I look forward to hearing from you.

Hilary Lidstone
(contact details in Church Who's Who directory)

News from Alison

Dear friends

For those of you not on the What's App group we thought you might like to see some photos of our outdoor Christmas lights. We ordered a nativity scene, but it was too small, so we drew and painted one. Malcolm made a pallet Christmas tree. We decided to make a special effort, because so many people are struggling. We had already decided to turn our front terrace lights on every evening since the second lockdown was announced (31st October) as we wanted to bring light into the community.

We were due to visit our family in Hampshire and then go to Senegal for Christmas and New Year but like so many people, we needed to cancel our plans and had a short trip to Devon & Cornwall.

Since we came home Malcolm has been digging up the path by my consulting room to make a slope rather than the steps, so that is easier for me and clients with mobility issues.

I made a new light display, when the third lockdown was announced. Hopefully it will cheer people as they walk past. It is called Hope of Spring. I have also been enjoying making bread, cakes, and coarse grain mustard, catching up with friends as well as reading and relaxing.

We have both returned to work and Malcolm has a lot of studying to do between now and the end of this month for his level 3 counselling training.

We hope you stay safe and well and we can all be together again before too long.

Love Malcolm & Alison Fox

Daily hope and encouragement

With another national lockdown in England now in place, and many choosing to close their doors to face to face worship, the DailyHOPE telephone line helps older, vulnerable, isolated and those people who cannot or choose not to access worship online to engage on the telephone.

0800 804 8044
DailyHOPE
A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

Since its launch, the DailyHOPE telephone service has seen around 400,000 people calling the line, many on a regular basis, totalling over 4 million minutes of call time in just 10 months.

The telephone service is continuing, and the DailyHOPE team continues to offer new monthly content on Option 3.

In February, DailyHOPE will be offering material around the whole area of sleep, and how it has been affected in the lockdown.

In March, the daily content will guide callers through Lent, preparing them for Easter.
DailyHOPE is available 24 hours a day and is free from all UK landlines and mobiles.

The telephone number is 0800 804 8044.

Thank you to Diane Blackwell for sending this information from Grapevine, emailed weekly news and information from the Diocese of Salisbury.

Looking at the sky by Anne Bond

At Easter 1944 I was given a book of poems collected by Field Marshal Viscount Wavell. It is still with me and includes the poem by W H Davies that is quite often quoted.

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.....

As I lay in bed this morning waiting for the newspaper to be delivered I watched the sky over Weymouth turn from dark grey to bright pink to a delicate mixture of blue, pink and white, and eventually to cloud over. It struck me then that for some of us the need to hurry about has been removed by the lockdown. It may be very frustrating at times but there is no need for it, so why not just sit and watch the sky, the contents of the Newspaper can wait.

A poor life this, if full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

Would anyone be interested in a set of books **"Left Behind Series".** There are 12 novels in the set written by Tim La Haye and Jerry B Jenkins.

The novels are their perception on the earth's last days. Really gripping reading and free to a good home.

A New Hobby?

Julie Godall and I went to a Craft Show at the Bath and West Showground a few years back. They had a workshop on book folding that Julie had heard of and really wanted to do. We booked in and that was the first time I had heard of it.

Bev Haggett

(If you are interested in finding out more you can email or message her on Facebook and she will help you with patterns and tips.)

Who's Who 2021?

Michael and I are using some of our 'once a day exercise' to deliver your Who's Who. If yours hasn't yet popped through your letterbox we hope it will be with you this month (weather permitting).

Pauline and Alex Neels' mobile numbers are incorrect. Their home number is correct so please make contact on that number. They are happy to email their mobile to anyone who requests it.

Please add Hazel Patterson's name to the PCC and DCC list.

Linda Miles

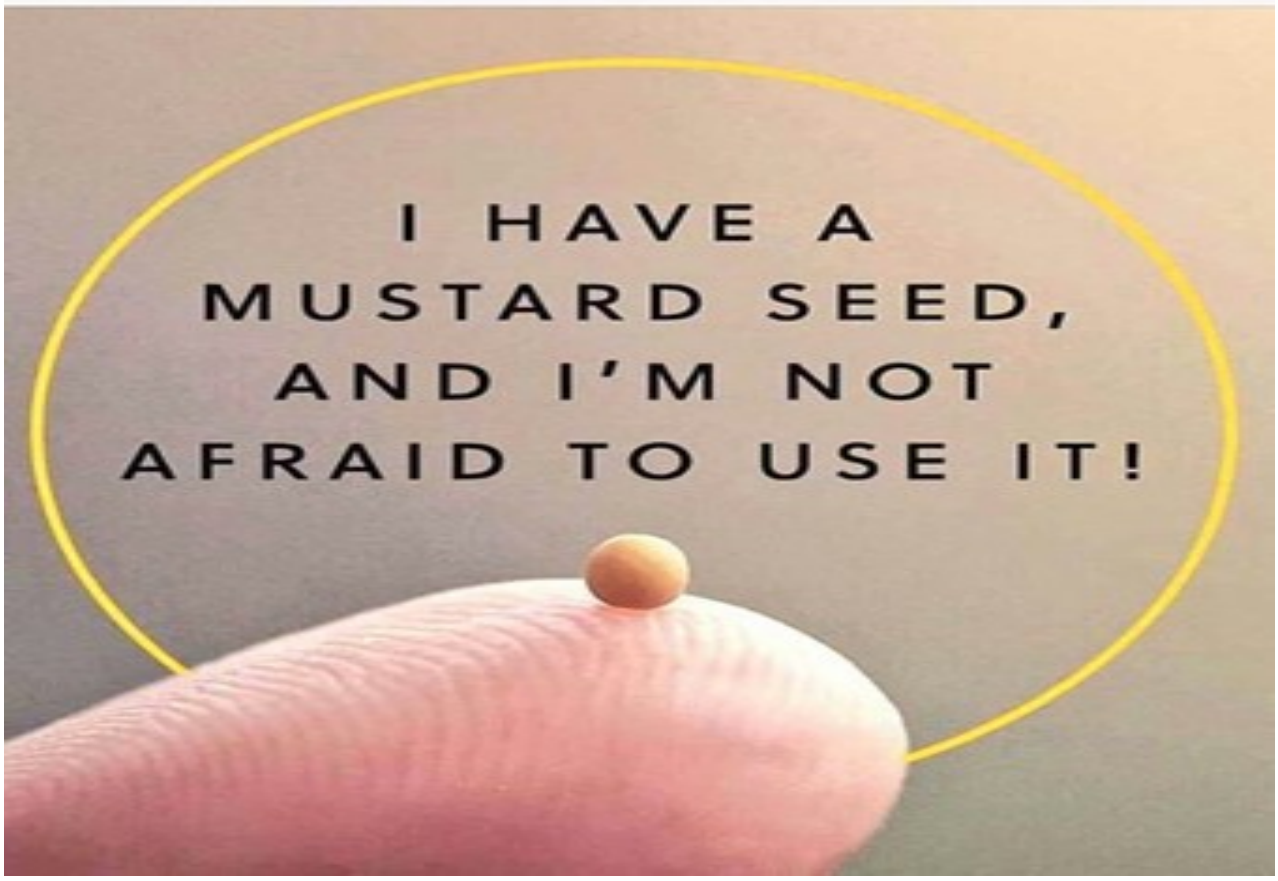
God's love endures forever – based on Psalm 136

All things bright and beautiful
All creature large and small
All things wise and wonderful
The Lord God made them all
God's love endures forever

Lord you gave me life
A living miracle
So I'll praise you for all you are
Help me do this for all my days on earth
God's love endures forever

Though I went away from you in 'teenage rebellion'
Through the ups and downs of my childhood
Although I didn't acknowledge it
At times you were just carrying me
God's love endures forever

You gave me a Christian family
Firstly my grandmother, a saint to the last
An Aunt and Uncle became like parents to me
And another Aunt too – those long sermons at church
And in other members of my family I thank you too
God's love endures forever

Thank you for having me re-join your family
Thanks to all the people who prayed and helped me through
The prodigal come home, to seek you more
To be in communion with my Godly church family
God's love endures forever

Hilary Lidstone