

ST. JOHNS CHURCH DONISTHORPE

GRAPEVINE

MAY 2021



A JOURNEY OF TWISTS AND TURNS, DEAD ENDS, DIVERSIONS AND DIFFICULTIES

Dear All,

At the moment I am reading John Bunyan's "A Pilgrims Progress." At my age I feel that I should already have read it, but it seems to have passed me by until now. It is really fascinating, telling the story of the journey of Christian, a young man who faces distractions, challenges, and perils at every turn of the way, but ends victorious, with helpful guides, as he stays on the narrow path to the distant Celestial City.

It brought to mind many of my less than successful journeys, running out of fuel, taking a wrong turn or having the car break down. But it also made me reflect on the journey that we have all been on this last year. Not one that we ever expected to be on and one that for all of us has been full of twists and turns, dead ends, diversions and difficulties. So many people have known loss of one kind or another, loss of loved ones, jobs, homes. So many have known isolation and loneliness.

But there is hope, because as I write this article, we have just embarked on step two of the Government's road map out of lockdown. A hugely welcome relief for many, with crowds on the high street replenishing their wardrobes and others visiting the hairdresser, to remind themselves what they look like without six months of extra hair growth! There was a sense of relief and a feeling of hope that this time we might finally be coming out of lockdown for good. With the continuing success of the vaccine programme the future is starting to look much more optimistic.

The government's roadmap signifies a journey out of lockdown. As a Christian I too am on a journey, a journey of faith, and I too have a guide to show me the way. Whenever I am facing difficulties, whenever I sit in the storms of life, whenever the way ahead seems dark, Jesus walks alongside me, and I do not have to face things alone. The journey out of lockdown, like my journey of faith, is unlikely to be smooth, but I have always found comfort in this verse from Psalm 56:13 "For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life."

Where might you find comfort on your journey?

God Bless you all Wilma Colley

ST JOHN'S IS OPEN FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP.

However, we continue at this time to have 3 Sunday services in the Woodfield Team each Sunday all at 10am.

May Services at Donisthorpe Church and across the Woodfield Team 10 am start

May 2nd: Baptism at Measham, Holy Communion at Packington and Snarestone with Morning Prayer at Appleby

May 9th: Holy Communion at **Donisthorpe**, Swebstone and Norton Juxta Twycross with Morning Prayer at Normanton and **5pm** Evening Prayer on Zoom
(contact Vivien for link on vivien.elphick@btinternet.com)

May 13th Ascension Day – recorded service accessible via website

May 16th: Holy Communion at Measham, Appleby and Packington

May 23rd: Pentecost Holy Communion at Normanton, Packington and Appleby

May 30th: Trinity Sunday Holy Communion at **Donisthorpe**, Measham, and Normanton, with Baptism at Sweptstone.

Please check our website for up to date details www.stjohnschurchdonisthorpe.org.uk .

The Covid guidance still has to be observed as to wearing face coverings, social distancing and so forth. We can take up to 30 people in a service so you would be very welcome to come and celebrate.

St John's is open Tuesdays and Thursday 10am-4pm, Wednesdays 10am – 1.30pm for private prayer/meditation. Do feel free to go in and enjoy this quiet space

REQUESTS FOR PRAYER.

If you would like us to pray for something on your heart (which may be for you personally or for someone you know, or a situation in the wider world), then do let us know. You can submit a request via the homepage of our website or direct to Vivien on vivien.elphick@btinternet.com

GOOD NEWS

We are pleased to announce that we are able to host the Post Office at St John's. St John's has been home for it now since April 14th after Ramscliff Avenue could no longer host it. The Post Office will be open on Wednesdays from 2.10pm to 4.10pm (NB May 19th will have different opening hours). Do use it.

FOREST CHURCH

Great fun was had at Forest Church on March 31st. We were blessed with warm sunshine and the joy of children and families seeing each other in 'real' time. Plenty of space as well for the younger ones to run off their energy. Watch out for the next Forest Church – no date set as yet

OAKTHORPE CHARITY

The Oakthorpe Charity meets periodically to look at applications. The trustees administer this fund which was established to promote the education and training of children and young people up to 25 years of age. Applicants must live in Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe, Stretton-en-le-Field and be in financial need. The trust has helped with school uniform, books for college students, school trips and more. Contact the Trust's secretary, Mrs. Linda Townsend, on 01530 274932, if you wish to apply for a grant.

WEDDINGS, FUNERALS AND CHRISTENINGS IN CHURCH.

Just to confirm that St John's is able to hold services for funerals, weddings and christenings. All are subject to Covid regulations at the time, which as you will know change from time to time. However funerals have been held for some time in church (and going on either to the cemetery or crematorium) as follows: January - Glenda Tunks - Irene Gamble. March - Alice Shuttleworth - Frank Saunt - Frank Golightly - Christopher Pardon.

Weddings are restarting this month and Christenings can also take place. So if you want to ask about having a service, then do contact Vivien Elphick on 01530 270354.

EVERYDAY FAITH: May 4th at 7pm



This month's Everyday Faith will have a different flavour. It will be more of a Bible study than normal. The topic? The book of Revelation – that last book of the Bible that has flummoxed more people than any other part of the bible. The meeting will be on Zoom so contact Vivien Elphick on vivien.elphick@btinternet.com for the link. We might all get completely lost or, hopefully, understand a bit more! Don't be afraid to join in.

BISHOP GULI.

Bishop Guli has now become the Bishop of Chelmsford, after her time locally as Bishop of Loughborough. Again no real time leaving service is possible for her so it is a Zoom farewell on Sunday 25th April at 3pm. The link for that will be on our website. We had the good fortune to meet her locally just before Lockdown curtailed so much



A LITTLE KNOWN FACT ABOUT THE COVID VACCINE

A little Wow! moment in time... or just another 'God-incidence'?

Over 80 years ago, in Greece, sixty thousand Jews lived peacefully in Thessaloniki. It was a valued and vibrant community. Most of these Jews worked in the port. So much so that the port of Thessaloniki was even closed on Saturday, Shabbat. Great emeritus Rabbis also lived and studied there. Everyone rubbed shoulders and appreciated each other.

On September 2, 1939, on the eve of the outbreak of World War II, it is on this great community that a sudden fear of the forthcoming Nazi terror arose. Hitler invaded Greece, on April 6, 1941, in order to secure its southern front before launching the famous Operation Barbarossa and commence the great offensive against Russia.

Of the 60,000 Jews in Thessaloniki, around 50,000 were exterminated at the Birkenau concentration camp, in record time! The massacre of the Jews of Greece was brief but intense. Very few had any the chance to escape, but among the survivors there was a family known as Bourla.

Sometime later, after the war, in 1961, a son was born into this miraculous family living in a refugee camp. His parents called him Israel - Abraham. He grew up and studied veterinary medicine in Greece. A brilliant student, Abraham gained a doctorate in reproductive biotechnology at the veterinary school of Aristotle University in Salonika.

At the age of 34, he decided to move to the United States. He changed his first name Abraham, to Albert. Albert integrated into the medical industry. He progressed quickly and joined a pharmaceutical company where he became "Head manager." He rose through the ranks and was appointment as CEO of this company in 2019. Throughout the following year Albert decided to direct the efforts of the company to try to find a vaccine against the deadly new virus which had just struck the world; Covid-19. His company expended great financial and technological efforts to achieve his vision and goal, to discover a vaccine that would beat Covid.

A year later the WHO (World Health Organization) validated his company to produce the long-awaited vaccine ... This vaccine will be distributed in several countries including Germany, which counts thousands of dead from the pandemic. Ironically, this vaccine which will save the lives of millions of people around the world including many Germans, was led and pushed by a little Jew from Thessaloniki, son of Holocaust survivors from whom most of his people were exterminated by Nazi Germany.

And that is why Israel became the first country to receive the vaccine.

In memory of his grandparents and his parents, who gave birth to Israel-Abraham Bourla, known today as Albert Bourla: CEO of Pfizer...

REFLECTION: A Meeting on the Road to Emmaus

By Vinita Hampton Wright

This imaginative prayer exercise is based on Luke 24:13-35, the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus

It's a long walk home from Jerusalem, but you're glad for the exertion. The physical work of walking might ease, just slightly, the harder work that's going on inside you today.

It is the work of grief. You lost a friend just a few days ago, not only a friend but your leader, your beloved teacher. And he didn't simply die; he was executed in the most torturous, shameful way. You've seen a lot in your lifetime, but the memories of Jesus' ordeal are forever branded into your memory. You close your eyes and see blood; you go to sleep but dream about someone suspended, gasping for air.

At least your friend is with you—both of you followed the teacher, with equal conviction and enthusiasm. So you bear your grief together now. As you walk and walk through the long, rainy afternoon, you encourage better memories—of all that the teacher said, of the people you know whom Jesus healed. You can't seem to stop talking, although several times one or both of you must stop talking because you must cry for a while.



The stranger joins you while you are still several miles from home. Within moments, it's clear that this person has no idea what has been going on in Jerusalem. With great heaviness and some annoyance, you fill in the barest details for him. All you have to say is "crucifixion" and anyone in Roman territories knows exactly what you're talking about.

But the stranger engages in the conversation with great energy. He must be some kind of teacher, because he launches into an explanation of how Jesus' fate is actually a good thing and the

proper fulfilment of what was predicted long ago. This is fascinating—you and your friend are all ears. Before you know it, you've arrived at your home and it's getting dark.

You invite the stranger to have supper with you and spend the night, rather than risk injury or other misfortune while on the road at night alone. Also you want to hear more of what he has to say. He graciously accepts your offer.

The first thing you do upon entering the house is prepare the evening meal. The three of you sit down to eat. Then the stranger takes the bread and blesses it. You feel a strange energy move through you and hover in the room.

Where have you heard this sort of blessing before?

The stranger hands each of you a piece of the bread. You take it, and memory washes over you—of a hillside with thousands of hungry people. Of a few loaves and fishes being transformed in an instant to miraculous abundance.

Suddenly, it is clear who this man is, eating at your table. You look into his face.

What do you see? What is his expression? What do you feel? What do you know in the truth of your heart?

Your friend has barely gotten the words out—"Why, it's the Lord!"—when the stranger vanishes.

The room still feels strangely warm, and there are waves of that energy, like lightning sparking all over the room. You and your friend stare at one another, and finally you say, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he explained the Scriptures? Didn't we know something even then—we just couldn't identify it?"

You finish your meal—what a healing pleasure to eat the bread blessed by those hands! But then you look at each other and know what you must do. You head back to Jerusalem. You have to tell Jesus' other followers who are still there in the city.

What is your conversation like on the way back?

You are traveling at night—something you never do, for safety's sake. What does it feel like to be on the road at such a strange hour?

What thoughts keep running through your mind on this journey?

How has your perspective changed, now that you have met the resurrected Jesus?