

**St James's Church, Biddenham**

**All Saints Church, Kempston**

# Virtual Church News

**Sunday 26 July**

**Seventh Sunday after Trinity**

Welcome to Virtual Church News for the seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 356993 or email [stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com)

## A Reading for the Week

### Romans 8.31-39

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Mental Health Webinars

The Diocese of St Albans are running webinars aimed at making our churches places of welcome and inclusion for people living with mental ill-health. Everyone is welcome - no need to book in advance. One webinar a month (starting 29 July) on a range of topics. For further details go to <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/mental-health-and-wellness/>



Barley fields near Stagsden

Photo by Rev Eric Lomax

*If you have any photos of Kempston or Biddenham, send them to [stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com)*

## Alpha Online

### Postponed to September

Do you want to find out more about the Christian faith? Do you want to be able to ask questions in a safe environment where all views are listened to and nobody is judged?



Then join our new Alpha Online Course which will be starting in September. For further details contact Jacqui on 356993 or at [stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com](mailto:stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com)

**Stay Home.  
Try Alpha Online**

## Join us for Online Services

Zoom services are held at 11am on a Sunday and 6pm on a Wednesday. Login details are sent out in the covering email to members of our church community. If anyone else would like these, please do get in touch. Everyone is welcome!

The Love of Christ is not locked down

**Virtual  
Virtch  
Church**

St James, Biddenham, All Saints, Kempston

## Message from Rev Eric Lomax

*'He was my North, my South, my East and West,  
My working week and my Sunday rest,  
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;  
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.'*

The last two verses of W H Auden's poem, 'Stop All the Clocks,' point with biting realism towards the futility of life. It was used to great effect in the 1994 film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, read by Matthew (John Hannah) at the funeral of his partner, Gareth (Simon Callow). It reminds of the fragility of life and our own mortality.

In the same way, we could say that the last five months have taught us that our society is not as stable as we thought and that our carefully constructed systems are far more vulnerable than we ever thought.

It is my son, Matthew's, birthday this week, so he and Anna came to visit it us. Their experiences of the last five months could not have been more contrasting. Matthew works in a residential care establishment for people with mental illness while Anna works in digital marketing for a chain of pubs and restaurants.

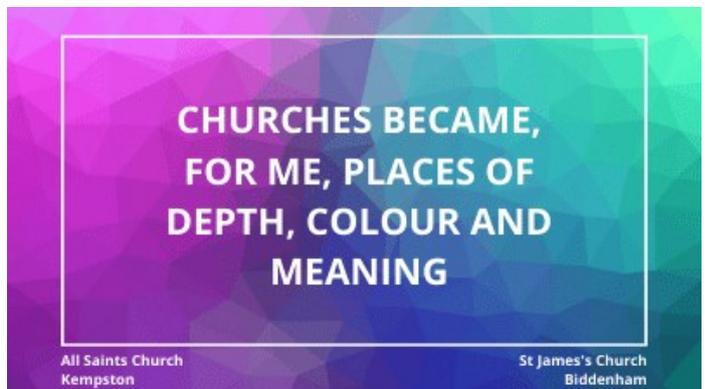
Matthew looks exhausted. He has had to go into work almost every day and in many cases has been working very long shifts. Anna, on the other hand, began by working from home but was then furloughed on eighty percent of her income. Like lots of people who work in the hospitality industry her job is under threat and the future for her is no longer certain. The same could be said for people who work in the performing arts, for shop workers, whose stores have been closed during lockdown, and for many more industries.

Over the last months I have encountered unprecedented degrees of isolation and fear. This week, I have spent time with two women who were just in the process of losing their father and a man who due to lockdown was unable to spend time with his family after he had watched his wife die. Beneath all of this, invisible to the eyes, is the bubbling, explosive cauldron of mental illness. There are so many people in some kind of despair at the moment who could easily cry out;

*'Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;  
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;  
For nothing now can ever come to any good.'*

When I first dipped my toes into the Christian Faith I encountered a kind of superficial tradition that really disguised the deep underlying message of the faith of the Bible. It was like a grey cloud of ritual hung over my head that seemed to bear no resemblance to the words of that great book, the Bible. Jesus taught powerful words of hope while this transformative message was, instead, presented with dimly lit, ancient stone, grey walls, and heavy, impenetrable doors.

This passage in Romans 8 was the first one that cast light on what faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was all about. It was, to me, like the clouds had begun to clear and a bright rainbow of promise shined through. Churches then became, for me, places of depth, colour and meaning.



What this reading says is very much a message for this time. During the darkness, the uncertainty, and despair that so many of us face, there really is a love that transcends all. It is the love of Jesus Christ that truly lasts forever and neither death, nor life, unemployment, isolation, uncertainty, or anything else in all creation can separate us from it.

As we open the doors of our church buildings, open also the doors of your hearts. Do not, as Auden suggests, pour away the ocean but rather wade deeper into the sea of faith. If you can, reach out and swim. Let him surround you in prayer, the reading of scripture, and fellowship (if that is allowed), with other people of faith. Immerse yourself in the Bible. Read a gospel (it will only take half an hour). Let God be your North and South, your East and West, your working week and Sunday rest, your noon, your midnight, your talk, your song. His love is truly there forever. Whatever happens, he is there.

God bless

Eric

## Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following on Sunday:

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship. A service preparing for this year's 'Virtually Keswick' Convention centred on Hope.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Rev Kate Bottley meets Christian artists on Crosby Beach, Merseyside.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from St Alban's Church, Holborn, London.

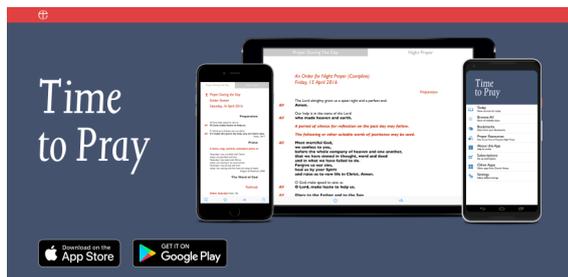
Wednesday 29 July:

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Hereford Cathedral.

## Time to Pray App (from the Church of England)

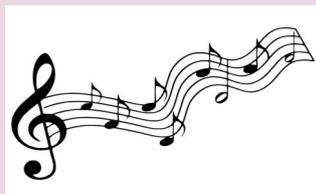
Everything you need for Prayer during the day in one place, with variations according to the day of the week and the season of the Church year.

Free to use, find it in your usual app store.



## Hymns and Devotional Music

Tim Grant-Jones, organist at All Saints, and his wife Irene are live streaming hymns and other devotional music at 10am each Sunday (before the Zoom service). Find this and other music on Facebook by searching for Grant-Jones Musical Services or entering #gjmusicalservices. You can also request hymns in advance!



## Discovery Group

Meets via Zoom on Thursday evenings 8pm. Contact [john.c.lambert@gmail.com](mailto:john.c.lambert@gmail.com) for details.

**\*Highly Recommended by Members of our Congregation\***

## Daily Hope



The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a free national phone line as a simple new way to bring worship and prayer into people's homes while church buildings are closed because of the coronavirus. Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

## For the Children (& young at heart!)

Today's Gospel reading is Matthew 13.31-33 and 44-52. This reading contains five parables, all telling us what God's kingdom is like. The first two parables are about very small things demonstrating that God's kingdom starts small but has a mighty and wide-ranging effect. The next two are examples of expensive things, teaching us to consider the value of God's kingdom. Finally, we are told about a fishing net that scoops up everyone, good and bad.

### Activities:

If you have some building blocks see if you can build a tall tower. Each block is small like a mustard seed but when put together they can make something big, just like God's kingdom. How tall can you make your tower?

With the help of an adult, and if you have the ingredients, try making some bread. If you don't use yeast the bread comes out flat, but look what happens if you add yeast!

### Join us with a prayer:

God, your kingdom is like a mustard seed - full of possibilities; yeast - it helps us to grow; treasure - worth searching for; a precious pearl - worth giving everything up for; a net - ready to gather us in. Help us to discover these secrets. Amen.

### Songs:

Faith as small as a mustard seed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xECxevPcRBs>

Nothing's too big

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yopo6DvV9Z8>

## Please pray with me

God our Father,  
In these difficult times,  
Lift our heads from the shadows,  
And help to open our hearts to you.  
By your Spirit,  
guide us, strengthen us,  
And restore us. **Amen.**



## For your prayers

Please pray for:

- Rev Eric Lomax and our PCCs as they make decisions on how and when we can reopen our churches safely.
- All those who continue to be affected by Covid-19 including NHS and care workers; those ill in hospital or at home; scientists working on treatments and vaccines; those who have lost their jobs; those suffering from mental health issues; those suffering from abuse at home and all those in countries where access to medical treatment is not an option.

Our prayer group meets at 8pm on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Get in touch if you would like the login details or have any prayer requests.

## Hymns/Songs of the Week

Lord, for thy tender mercies sake

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvidFFF0IfE>

All my hope on God is founded

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3LCGh02Vew>

Canons by Phil Wickham

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r\\_GNVWAo1pY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_GNVWAo1pY)

How Great is our God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKLQ1td3MbE>

## Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

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Mob: 07805 879537

Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

\* Note: new landline number from June 2020

## Bedford Foodbank

Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever.



Donations of food can be placed in a box in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets. In Biddenham, Imogen Sanctuary is collecting donations from various roads once a month. Email sarah.sanctuary@yahoo.com for further details.

Items currently needed include Cup-a-Soup, Jellies (pre-made), Tinned Rice Pudding, Toothbrushes, Toothpaste, Hand Soap, Anti-Bac Spray Cleaners, Washing Up Liquid, Deodorant, Shampoo and Shower Gel.

Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. More information can be found at <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>

## Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

### Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email [help@biddenham.org.uk](mailto:help@biddenham.org.uk) with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email [help@biddenham.org.uk](mailto:help@biddenham.org.uk)

### Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695