

Virtual Church News

Sunday 16 August

Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Welcome to Virtual Church News. 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

A Reading for the Week

Matthew 15:21-28

'Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' ²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' ²⁴ He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' ²⁶ He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' ²⁷ She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.'

Virtch

Zoom services will continue to be 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!

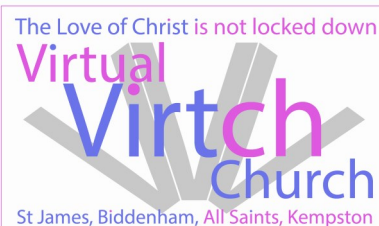


Photo by Richard Moxon

If you have any photos of Kempston or Biddenham, send them to stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

Service at All Saints on Sunday 16th

Services in our churches (or the churchyards if good weather) during August will be as follows:

Sundays 16th & 30th August - 9.30am All Saints

Sunday 23rd August - 9.30am St James

Please read the following important notes on what to expect when attending Church

Face coverings must be worn by all those who attend (this is now a legal requirement) (if you are exempt please bring some evidence with you). We will have a few disposable face masks for use by anyone who has been unable to obtain one.

Please wash your hands before leaving home. You will be asked to sanitise your hands on entering and leaving the church.

A one-way system will operate in both the Church and the Churchyard. Please enter the churchyard via the Main Gate. Entry to the church (if the service is inside) is by the main door. Please note the signs in place and follow the Sidesperson's instructions. You will be asked to exit via the Tower door behind the organ and the side gate in the churchyard. Please adhere to social distancing requirements at all times when in the Church and Churchyard.

We are required to keep a register of attendees' names and contact numbers which can be used for the Track and Trace system if required. These details will be stored securely and disposed of after 21 days.

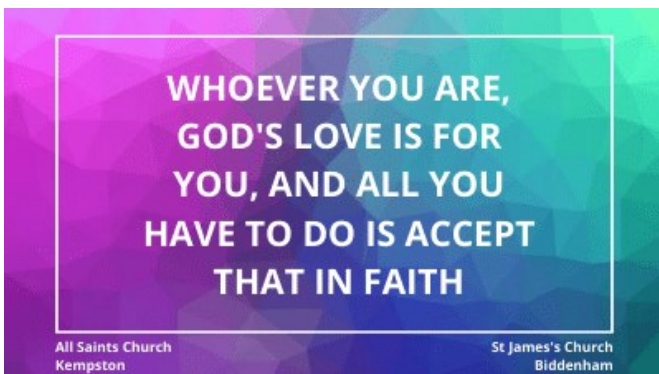
If you are in a vulnerable category we advise you not to attend these physical services, but this is ultimately your decision to make.

Please do not attend if you feel unwell.

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

This week's bible passage is not easy to read, and it is not meant to be.

Jesus and his disciples were Jewish people and as Jewish people, they were prone to spending their time in their own community amongst their own people. Jesus was seen, by his followers, as the Jewish Messiah who had come to deliver the people of Israel from oppression. They believed themselves to be chosen as God's own special people and he had come for them and nobody else.



In Matthew's Gospel, this story takes place at the end of Jesus's ministry. They had wandered round the Jesus communities and he had been serving their exclusive religious club. Now Jesus takes the disciples outside their comfort zone to Gentile country. Many of the Jewish believers believed that Gentiles (non-Jews) were outside of the scope of God's love. It was a place called Tyre and, just then, a foreign woman came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.'

Initially, Jesus is shown in a bad light. She is desperate for help for her daughter and Jesus just ignores her and so do his arrogant disciples. The woman persists and in the end Jesus says a terrible thing; 'I have come only to help my own people, is it right that I waste their food by throwing it to the dogs?'

To pause a moment, Jesus is modelling religious behaviour here. He ignores the woman in pain, he ignores the foreigner, he follows the principles of gender and racial prejudice, and he keeps the outsider as the outsider. God's love was for God's people, and God's people alone.

In the chapter before this, we had been told the story of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus had taken a group of people into the wilderness and with only a small amount of food, a few loaves, and a few fishes, he had demonstrated that with God, there was enough to go round for everybody. This is the extent of God's love and God's grace. Now, to this Canaanite woman, he seemed to be saying that there was not enough love to go round, and it was limited to his people.

It was then that this woman said the bravest of things; 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.'

Jesus's face must have glowed with these words. He had brought his religious followers into this community. They too had ignored the woman. They were all here and only she had understood. She would have comprehended the feeding of the 5,000 completely. She knew that as far as the flawed, religious norms of exclusivity were concerned, she did not deserve God's grace. This was Jesus. He was, and is, not like religious people. His love is for everybody. He said to her; 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

It is a simple principle; whoever you are, God's love is for you, and all you have to do is accept that in faith. In Jesus, God breaks down the boundaries of race, gender, nationality, and religion. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

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. When our plans change.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise. Exploring the rich history of Christian worship at Trentham Gardens.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Wednesday 19 August:

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Alpha Online

Starting in 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



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 on a range of topics. For further details go to <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/mental-health-and-wellness/>

Hymns and Devotional Music

Although Tim and Irene Grant-Jones' have now finished their Sunday morning hymns and devotional music recordings, past recordings are still on Facebook. Find these by searching for Grant-Jones Musical Services or entering #gjmusicalservices.



Discovery Group

Meets via Zoom on Thursday evenings 8pm. Contact 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!)

This week's story is from Matthew 15.(10-20), 21-28. In this story, Jesus has two tricky encounters, first with the Pharisees and then with a Canaanite woman. The stories are all about faith and membership of God's people—and the outcome of the encounters is something of a surprise!

Activities:

Think about when someone has been kind to you recently. Did they use kind words or actions (or both)? How important were those words/actions to you? How did they make you feel?

Think about some people you could be kinder to and write their names on a piece of paper. Pray that God will help you to be kinder to these people. Keep the paper as a reminder.

Make a kindness jar—decorate a jam jar and then write on ice lolly sticks some kind things to say to others and thank you prayers to God for other people (if you don't have lolly sticks, write on strips of paper/card). Take out a lolly stick each day as a reminder to be kind, and try to use those words/pray that prayer.

Song:

Two little eyes to look to God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxv-Gly-ahc>

Let us pray together:

God of all, as we go out into the week ahead, help us to keep our eyes on you and the things you want us to do, so that we do not become distracted by the things that draw us away from you. **Amen.**

Please pray with me

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen



For your prayers

Please pray for:

- Good weather on Sunday so our service at All Saints can be held outdoors.
- Those who have been made redundant or who are still on furlough.
- Those in hospitals and care homes and all the doctors/nurses/carers and other workers who look after them.

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

And can it be

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu2uA6U4Fvg>

Ave Verum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXjn6srhAIY>

Look up child by Lauren Daigle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4Nx2hEhVRE>

Christ's is the world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch/>

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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 with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email 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