

April 2021

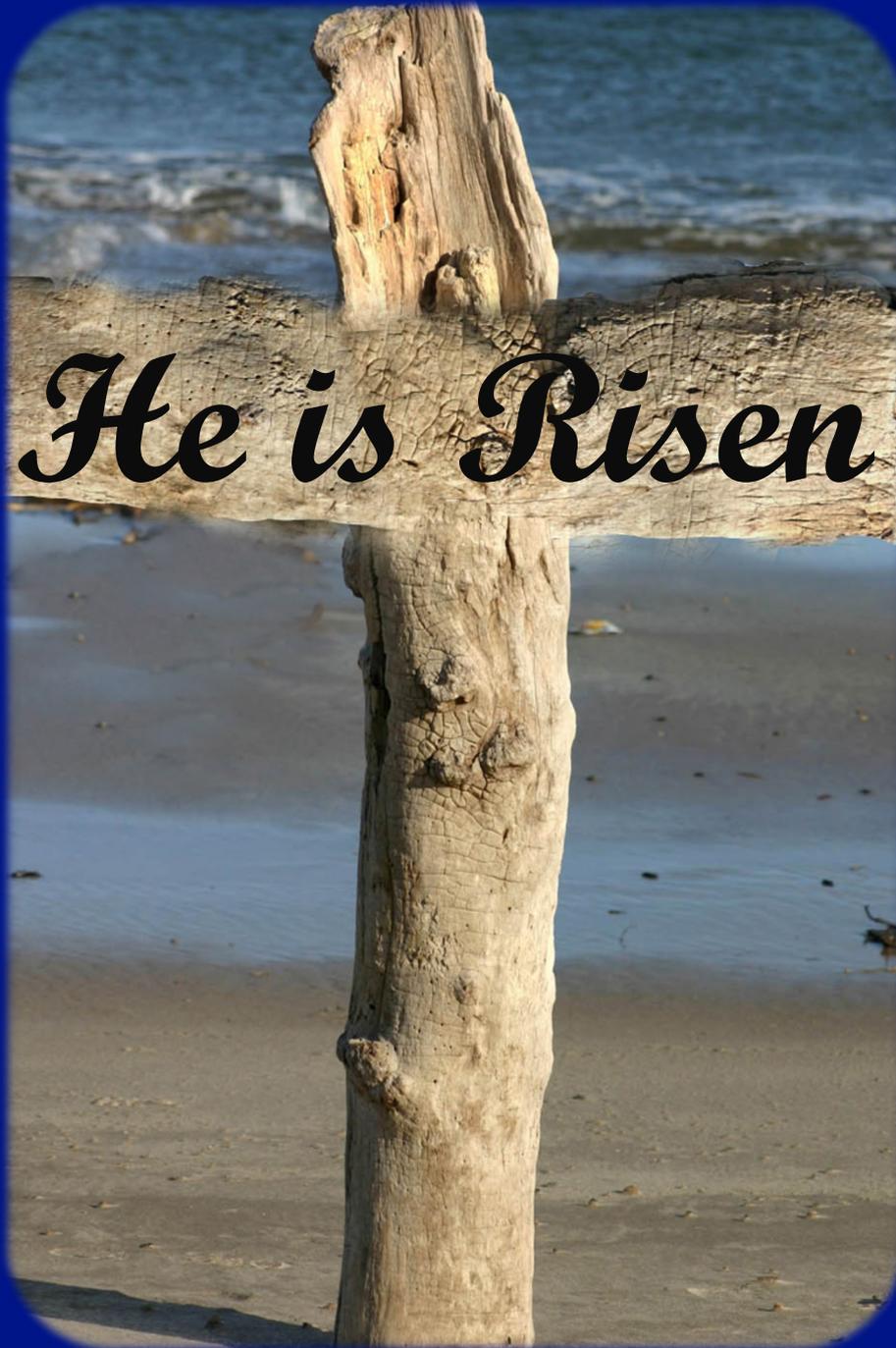
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TRINITY TIMES



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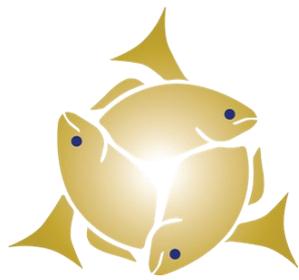


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This magazine gives the times of the Easter Services and an article about the closed churches during the pandemic from Patrick. Phil tells all children (of any age) about the activities which they can join in with over Easter and there is a review of a book about Hamnet, Shakespeare's son.

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Remember we love to receive articles and photographs for the magazine which can be sent to the e-mail address below. However, we reserve the right to edit anything that is sent to us and the editor's decision is final. Please note that views expressed in Trinity Times are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Parochial Church Council.

The next magazine will be the **May 2021** edition

The copy date is 16 April

If any item is left until the very last minute, or received after the copy date, there is no guarantee that it will be able to be included in the magazine.

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#HolyTrinityonsocialmedia   

Front cover :- Cross—He is Risen.

Original photograph of a piece of wood taken on the beach at Lindisfarne (Holy Island) and then changed into a cross.

By Felicity Howlett

Holy Trinity Team



Revd. Patrick Taylor
Vicar



Revd. Steve Jarvis
Associate Vicar

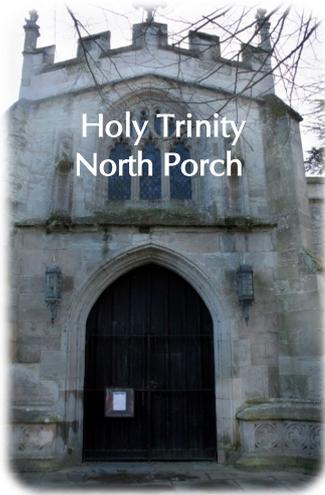


Revd. Kay Dyer
Associate Priest



Phil Harper
Children & Families Minister

Closed porches and new thresholds: a vicar's journey through lockdown



“So, what’s it been like being a vicar during this pandemic?” I was asked the other day. “Well, interesting...” began my response. Perhaps the image that sums it all up for me is that of the closed North Porch at Holy Trinity church. Before Covid, it was open everyday and the large arched entrance was a welcoming sight as parishioners and visitors alike walked up the path through the avenue of trees. Seeing it closed, with the inevitable cobwebs and leaves accumulating around the gates, has been a sad sight for me. It has come to symbolise the separation that we have all experienced through not being able to go into our churches to worship together and



enjoy being with one another these past twelve months. As George Herbert noted in his poem *The Church Porch*, praying on our own is all very well and good, but our prayers are far more effective when we say them together:

*Though private prayer be a brave designe,
Yet publick hath more promises, more love...*

But as one threshold has been closed, so another has opened up. We made an early decision that we would focus on trying to create an online experience of worship that was not merely a chance to look in on what other people are doing in the church, but rather an invitation to those watching via the internet to engage with the service as active worshippers. Developing the live streaming of services had already been our intention for some years, but we have had to move faster in the past year than we ever imagined we would. I’m very grateful to those who have been very generous and given much time and effort to enable us to set up our online worship.



There is a sense in which our online offering is a sort of porch: a virtual threshold which invites anyone who is passing to take a step in and see what church might be about. Traditionally, porches have been a place of transition between the secular world outside the church and the spiritual world within. They offer shelter from the rain and a place to meet and greet. The porch at Holy Trinity has a wonderful sanctuary knocker which indicates that a porch should also offer a safe space to those in trouble or need.

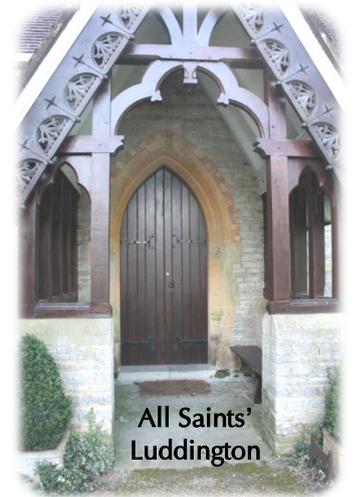
Covid has helped us to turn our attention to those in the porch: the many people who are on the edges of our church community, or the curious who would like to step into the church but have found it difficult to make that transition physically in the past. Online worship offers a porch which is accessible and attractive for people to just pop their head round the corner to see what’s inside.

My hope, as we come out of the restrictions in the coming weeks, is that we will find a way to help the many people who are looking us up online to connect with the church *in-person* too. In his fine book on church re-ordering called “Re-Pitching the Tent”, Richard Giles encourages churches to have glass doors on the inside of their porches, to allow the first time worshipper to see inside before entering. Otherwise, he says, “the click of the latch, the creaking of the door and the literal falling into the nave (especially if occupied by gawping worshippers), are common features guaranteed to deter for another year or two all but the most intrepid of seekers after truth.”

Cont...



So this next phase of our journey as a parish will not just be about **recovery** of what we have lost, it also needs to be about **renewal** and **resurrection**. In this Easter season we are reminded that the risen Christ was not recognised at first as being the same person as before: he was different, but still Jesus. It is my prayer that we will, together, discover how we are being called to be a different church, but still the church of Jesus Christ as we enter this new era. May our porches, whether physical or virtual, be places that both welcome in and reach out, as we continue



to be inspired by our vision that remains the same: to see lives changed through God's love.

A very happy Easter to you all.

Patrick

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.

Luke 24:1-8

WORSHIP NOTES



Holy Week and Easter

Most services will be open to congregations again from 28 March. However, due to the ongoing Covid restrictions, some services across Holy Week are different from the normal pattern.

Sunday, 28 March (Palm Sunday)

Holy Trinity 10am Eucharist with blessing of Palm Crosses.
(pre-booked congregation and online).

St Helen's and All Saints' 9.30am Holy Communion with blessing of Palm Crosses.
Pre-booking required for both churches.

Monday, 29 March to Wednesday, 31 March

Holy Trinity 9.15am Morning Prayer (online only).

Thursday, 1 April (Maundy Thursday)

Holy Trinity 9.15am Morning Prayer (online only).
7.30pm Eucharist of the Last Supper followed by the Watch for an hour.
(Pre-booked congregation and online broadcast).

Friday, 2 April (Good Friday)

Holy Trinity Walk-through Veneration of the Cross between Noon and 3pm.
No services at the village churches today.

Saturday, 3 April (Holy Saturday)

Holy Trinity 8.30pm – The Service of Light with lighting of the Easter fire and Paschal Candles
(broadcast online without a congregation).

Sunday, 4 April (Easter Sunday)

Holy Trinity Pre-recorded Parish Eucharist for Easter Day available online
Walk-through Holy Communion between 9.30am and 11am.

St Helen's and All Saints' - 9.30am Holy Communion with pre-booked congregations.

Sunday, 11 April

Holy Trinity 10am Holy Communion (non-broadcast service, pre-booking required).
For those wishing to participate in an online service, the Diocese of Coventry are offering a service on
this day.

All Saints' 9.30am Holy Communion (pre-booked).

St Helen's No service.

Sunday, 18 April

Holy Trinity 10am Eucharist (pre-booking required, broadcast online).
5pm Holy Communion BCP (no booking required).

St Helen's Pre-booked 9.30am Holy Communion.

All Saints' No service.

Sunday, 25 April

Holy Trinity 11.15am Shakespeare Service (online and pre-booked congregation).
5pm Eucharist (no pre-booking required).

All Saints' 9.30am Holy Communion (pre-booked).

St Helen's No service.



EASTER ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN OF ANY AGE

It seems somewhat of a tradition that all my articles now begin with the infamous words “things are going to be a little different this year” and so why should Easter be any different!

Although we aren't able to have the Good Friday *Journey to the Cross* service, I would encourage families to come to our walkthrough on Good Friday 12-3pm. But also, in the churchyard we will have an **Easter Story Trail**. From Palm Sunday until after Easter there will be ten eggs hidden around the churchyard. On each egg there is a question or challenge and a QR code to read part of the story on a mobile phone. This is something for any age to take part in, perhaps seeing parts of the Easter story in a different light. As well as being at Holy Trinity, the trail will also be available in All Saints' Luddington and St Helen's Clifford Chambers churchyards as well.



Congratulations!

You have found the first egg!

(Well... an egg shaped leaf!)

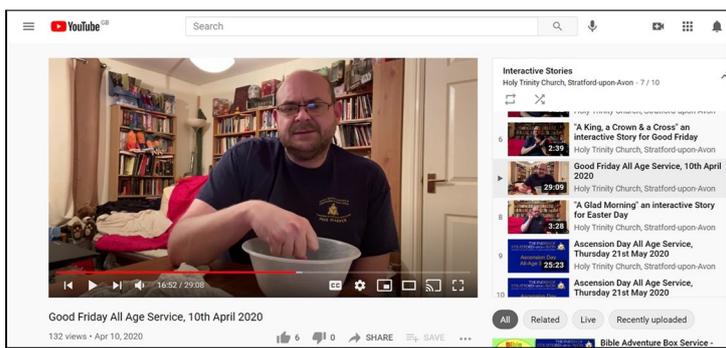
Did you know...
On Palm Sunday we celebrate Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey



Challenge
Who can find the biggest leaf on the floor?
Once you have found a leaf wave it all the way to the next egg!



Scan the QR code to visit www.bibleadventurebox.org.uk/easter-trail and read along with the story of Easter as you complete the trail.



The one advantage to recording and putting services online is that they stay there.

On our Church YouTube channel (Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon) there is a playlist called **Interactive Stories**, that gathers together all

the interactive stories I recorded last Easter, as well as the Good Friday All Age Service, with prayers and activities to join in with. If you didn't manage to see them last year you can still use them, or even re-watch them.

Since September Claire, the Children's and Family Worker from St James' Alveston, and I, have been recording a monthly service to share online called the **Bible Adventure Box Service**. As well as being able to watch the service, parents can request a free box for their child to use with the service, which contains all the items needed for a craft, song words, puzzles and a snack. We have recorded a service for Easter and it will be available on YouTube and Facebook. If you would like to request a box email me at phil@stratford-upon-avon.org or if you know of someone who maybe interested please let them know. We've been getting great feedback on both the services and the boxes and it would be lovely to share with more people.

Phil Harper



PCC report: Tuesday 9 March

by Ruth Poulten



Plans to provide a boost to Holy Trinity's lockdown recovery were shared with PCC, alongside a roadmap for the reopening of the parish churches in line with Government guidelines.

As we come out of the pandemic, new 5-year plans for the churches in the parish will be needed, to reflect the many changes that have taken place and new challenges that now exist. The Parish Strategy Advisory Group is leading the review work, and will consider priorities under six key focus areas. These are:

Worshipping God, Welcome and Care, Making Disciples, Outreach and Engagement, Buildings and Environment, Financial Sustainability

Reverend Patrick Taylor said, "Our vision is lives changed through God's love and we do that through the six areas that we need to focus on – six aspects of the life of our churches that should exist or are needed in order to exist as churches in this parish.

There are also plans to improve the experience for visitors to Holy Trinity, but these are dependant on a Cultural Recovery Funding Bid, as Treasurer Mike Warrillow outlined. "We've applied for a significant grant for a number of items, including a new website, a virtual tour and a deep clean of the church. We're also looking to impact our overall deficit and we'll find out at the end of March if our funding application is successful. We can only action these plans if we are."

PCC approved for services in all three churches in the parish to re-commence with a congregation from Palm Sunday, 28 March.

Approval of end of year 2020 accounts

PCC also approved the end of year 2020 accounts with the overall balance sheet standing at around £294,688, a reduction of £102,532 on the previous year. This largely reflects the loss of donations from visitors at Holy Trinity during Covid restrictions.

Capital Spending Proposal 2021

Mike also took PCC through the 2021 Capital Spending Proposals. "We're trying to assess where we are, against the needs that we have. There is a lot to do, so this is about getting a better understanding of what the challenges are and what's missing too. Then we can make some informed decisions about our priorities." The PCC will be considering what should be prioritised at their away day in May.

North Transept

Options to develop the North Transept are with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) for their views. An extension to the South Porch, South Transept and against the north side of the Chancel were the options most favoured by the PCC and we await feedback on what could be feasible.

Bier House

Plans to develop the Bier House have been put on hold due to costs. The structure will be stabilised in the short term with a temporary roof to keep it watertight.

News in Brief

Minor amendments have been made to the Safeguarding Policy as a result of its annual review. The policy can be found on the Holy Trinity website.

Mark Sayers has been appointed 'Clerk of Works' and will have oversight of buildings, reporting to PCC in that role.

The APCM meeting will be held on Sunday 9 May 2021 and will take place following the morning Eucharist.

FROM THE REGISTERS - FEBRUARY/MARCH

Christenings

14 March Molly Jane Cynthia Atkinson

Weddings

Funerals

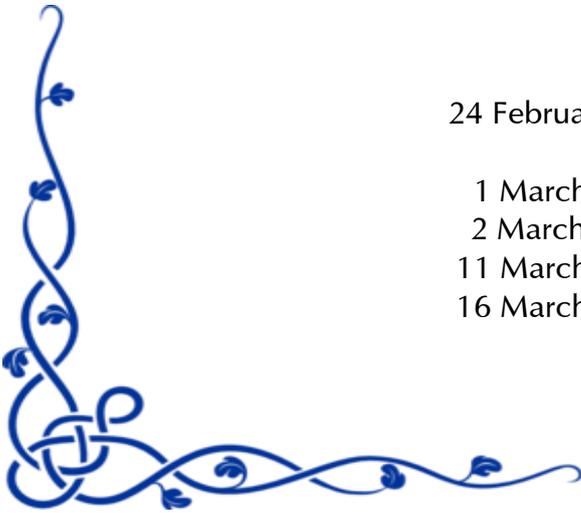
24 February Gillian Mary Collins

1 March Jane Smallman

2 March Eileen Bowman

11 March Penelope Sharpe

16 March Patricia Annie Cranke



Loving God, we come to you as we are – broken, weary, afraid, sad, hopeful, optimistic. Please meet with each of us in this moment, minister to us and those we love. Assure us that you are with us, and will never leave us. Show us how to heal, how to come to terms with loss, how to assist others, how to rest, how to slow down, how to look ahead with confidence in your goodness. Thank you, God.

Amen.

From Scene 6: Hope. "Here - and there"

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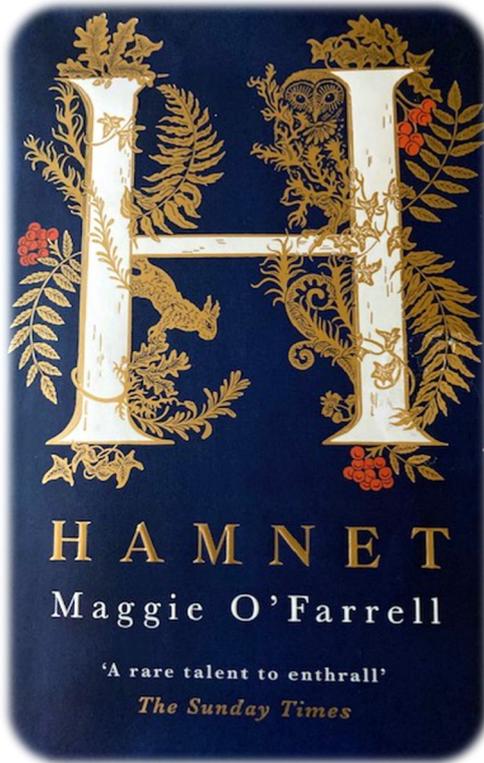
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"HAMNET"

by Maggie O'Farrell

Book review by Judith Dorricott



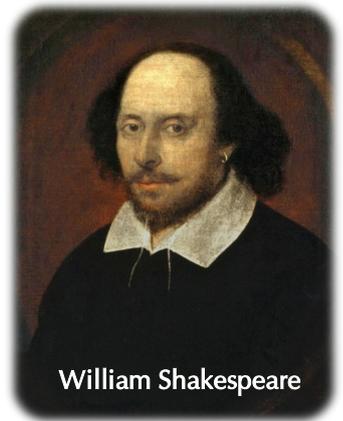
In 1596, while William Shakespeare was working in London, his only son Hamnet, twin of Judith, died in Stratford-upon-Avon at the age of eleven. Very little is known about Hamnet, but the black death was rife at that time so plague might have been the cause.

The author Maggie O'Farrell has been inspired by this nugget of information to imagine the lives of the Shakespeare family in Stratford-upon-Avon in the late 16th century, to analyse the grief that the family must have felt at Hamnet's death, and to examine the bonds that exist between twins. The author wonders if the death of Hamnet may have helped inspire Shakespeare to write his masterpiece "Hamlet" just four years later. O'Farrell's dazzling and imaginative novel "Hamnet" is the result of many years of research.

Records do not show whether Shakespeare, his wife and three children lived with their grandparents in Henley Street, or whether the two families lived next door to each other in adjoining properties but O'Farrell draws a wonderful picture of the extended family. Added to this, the accurate description of our town will delight local readers and O'Farrell is indebted to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, where she conducted much of her research before embarking on the novel. Not only do the descriptions of the town and the country around us seem vivid, but the details of gardens, herbal remedies and falconry habits of that period add to the realism.

The author is also grateful to the guides at Holy Trinity Church for their patience and help with her many requests. Hamnet and his sister Judith were buried in the churchyard at Holy Trinity Church, but sadly the location of their graves is unknown.

The paperback edition of "Hamnet" is available from 1 April 2021, and can be found in stationery stores and some supermarkets, as well as being available online from major booksellers and other retailers.



William Shakespeare



*Now cracks a noble heart. Good-night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.*

Horatio ~ "Hamlet" - Act V: Scene 2

The church bells at St. Helen's, Clifford Chambers past, present and future...

Clifford Chambers nestles on the banks of the River Stour in the beautiful Warwickshire countryside, just a short distance from Stratford-upon-Avon.

A church has been standing in the village for more than 900 years, although the building we know today is the result of significant later additions.



The west tower contains a peal of six bells, hung on two levels. As early as the 17th century there were just four bells, which were recast in 1771, while a fifth bell was added in 1773; both these activities were undertaken by Matthew Bagley III of Chacombe, Northamptonshire. Members of the Bagley family were casting bells at Chacombe between 1605 and 1785, and many examples survive both in local churches and across England.

A new bell frame was supplied by Birmingham bell founders, James Barwell in 1904, and a new treble bell was added in 1946, cast by the well-known Midlands firm of John Taylor and Co of Loughborough. This new bell bears the dedication "To the memory of the Fallen of Clifford Chambers 1939-1945".

However bell maintenance is an ongoing story and more work has been needed recently.

After a recent inspection by Taylors of Loughborough (the bell repair contractor) we established a fault with the treble pulley block which needed to be replaced, and an additional pulley guide on the floor of the belfry was added.

The long draft, in excess of 25 feet from clock room to ground floor ringing chamber, has always given us a risk, with ropes moving about in an uncontrolled action. Metal rope guides have now been installed to establish a good standard of rope control, which will be a great relief to those of us who have rung there in the past and who hope to again soon!

These improvements also mean that once Covid19 restrictions are lifted, we will be able to teach learners from the parish, and we are pleased to report that we already have more than ten people on the waiting list.

The future of bell-ringing in Clifford Chambers looks good!



Marion Mitchell



Audio-Visual Work in Church

by Paul Suter

Lynn and I decided a few years ago that when we retired we would move to the Midlands. The reason was so that we could be much nearer our narrowboat which is moored in Braunston Marina (near Daventry). Living as we did in West Sussex we had seen as much as we wanted of the A34 and M40 for one lifetime. We drew a circle around Braunston with a one hour drive time and started investigating. In the end we realised that if we went to the boat and stayed in the marina we would often come to Stratford. We looked at the Holy Trinity web site, attended a few services and the rest is history.

Monday 23 March 2020 is a day that many of us will not forget for quite some time. For us the day started in West Sussex with a removal firm loading our furniture into their truck for delivery to Stratford-upon-Avon the next day. We drove up later in the day and arrived here in time to watch Boris declare 'LOCKDOWN!' and all our lives changed. We therefore missed by one day the last 'old normal' Parish Eucharist to be held at Holy Trinity.

Our first service, having moved here, was therefore one of the first in lockdown and the clergy had to adapt very quickly. I remember those first services from their homes broadcast on mobile phones.

The church already had an audio system that was used to feed the loud-speakers in the church. Although fairly old it has proved adequate for our needs. However, an investment has been required in good quality cameras and the technology to bring together the audio and visual feeds and send them out to be broadcast on the internet. What we have today is therefore:

- Existing audio system with mixing desk, upgraded with new microphones at the front to pick up the organ and choir.
- Laptop running Microsoft PowerPoint. PowerPoint provides the slides that contain:
 - ◇ Words that you see at the bottom of the screen
 - ◇ Any videos
 - ◇ Full page slides (for example the Eucharistic prayer)

A full service can be quite a few slides. The last one I did was 193. Whilst that may sound quite daunting it is worth pointing out that just one hymn can easily be 20 slides.

- Three cameras. These are located:
 - ◇ Left hand pillar at the front
 - ◇ Right hand pillar at the back
 - ◇ On a tripod at the back by the font. This one will eventually be mounted on the rear wall

These cameras are all PTZ (pan, tilt and zoom). This means that they can all be individually moved into a suitable position. These can then be saved as presets so they can be recalled during the service.

- Roland Video Switcher. This is the technology that takes the feed from:
 - ◇ Audio mixing desk
 - ◇ Laptop running PowerPoint
 - ◇ Cameras

and sends it to:

- Laptop that broadcasts live to Facebook. One of the challenges is that the broadband speed available in church is too poor to be used. We, therefore, have a temporary solution of a mobile phone sim card in a router.



Cont...

Audio Visual Work in Church cont...

Ideally, there would be a team of three working to broadcast a service with the duties split:

- Audio
- PowerPoint slides
- Cameras

The broadcast looks after itself once the button is clicked.



As there is currently only a small team of volunteers we have two on duty; the audio and PowerPoint tasks being combined. We really do need a number of extra people to join the team. No previous experience is necessary. When I joined the team my only experience consisted of sending countless colleagues to sleep in PowerPoint presentations in my old day job. If you



think you may like to serve in this way but are not sure then you would be welcome to come along and watch what happens from the safety of a seat behind us. If anyone is interested please contact Andy Winter andy@stratford-upon-avon.org

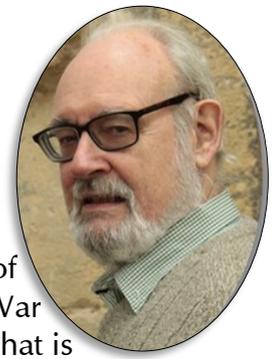
Clearly, there have been some frustrating issues and gremlins as we have got to grips with the technology. As this is worship it needs to be the best it can be. However, from my personal point of view, I would much rather take part at home in a live act of worship with occasional hiccups than watch a pre-recorded 'perfect' performance.



Photograph taken by Paul Lageu at the English church in Wengen, Switzerland.

The quote is from Isaiah chapter 40:31

Those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.



“This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is perhaps the end of the beginning”. Churchill’s famous words, on the turning-point of the Second World War in 1942 in Africa, are perhaps quite appropriate as the nation begins to move out of (what is hoped to be) the final lockdown.

A
JOURNAL
OF THE
Plague Year:
BEING
Observations or Memorials,
Of the most Remarkable
OCCURRENCES,
As well
PUBLICK as PRIVATE,
Which happened in
L O N D O N
During the late
GREAT VISITATION
In 1665.

Written by a CITIZEN who continued all the
white in London. Never made publick before.

L O N D O N :
Printed for E. Nott at the Royal-Exchange; J. Roberts
in Warwick-Lane; A. D. at without Temple-Bar;
and J. Graves in St. James's-Street. 1722.

The Novel Theology group has recently been reading Daniel Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year* written after the Plague hit London in 1665. Some of the parallels to our recent situation are quite uncanny. The impact of that plague, like many others over the centuries, was far more devastating than today, in terms of the proportion of the population who were lost. But we have seen some very similar examples of every possible reaction – panic on the one hand, and irresponsibility on the other, in the face of a disease which could be transmitted even by those who had no symptoms; loss of livelihoods as well as of life, but a great public and private generosity in caring for those affected; a desperate search to understand just how the disease spread and how it could be stopped; a reliance on “staying at home”, combined with all sorts of tricks to avoid having to do so, even amongst those already (unknowingly in most cases) infected. To add to our understanding of this visitation of the plague, Trinity Players’

production of *The Roses of Eyam* only a few years ago reminded us of how it spread to one distant village which generously quarantined itself, at great cost of life, in order to save its neighbours.



Unknowingly infected.

What the citizens of the seventeenth century did not have, of course, was the science of vaccination. That is something on which we place our trust today, and with good reason. Yet we know that even that is no guarantee that this disease will go away. Many of us, myself included, did not know much about the 1918 flu pandemic (which some believe killed more people than World War I) until the newspapers starting drawing parallels with today. Flu, of course, has never gone away, and it still occasionally kills people; but it is pretty firmly under control, thanks not least to vaccination. “Under control” is probably the most we can hope for in the case of Covid also.

As we come out of this dark period into the joy of Easter, we might feel that much the same is true of the age-old pandemic of human greed and violence. Paul Gifford’s article, elsewhere in this edition, has much to say on that pandemic, its causes, and its healing through the death on the Cross of the ultimate Scapegoat. The decisive victory has been won, but again – looking at the world today – we can barely say that the pandemic is “under control”. We have recently seen violence and conflict in the least expected places, which must make us wonder. We cannot take what we call civilisation for granted, any more than we can take the defeat of Covid for granted. But, for many of the challenges we face, “staying at home” is precisely **not** the long-term answer. There is work to be done out in the world – from hugging our neighbours (when permitted) to combating climate change.

A decisive battle has been won. But it is not the end, maybe not even the beginning of the end – only the end of the beginning, and the possibility of a truly new phase in the human story.

A Christian anthropologist considers the Cross: Rene Girard

by Paul Gifford

We all know that human groupings of all sorts are prone to exclude, bully, scapegoat and otherwise victimise fellow humans.

Rene Girard, French-American anthropologist and culture theorist, opens up this perspective in a new and radical way and relates it to the Gospel story, of human sin and violence and of Jesus as the “scapegoat” who takes all this upon himself on the Cross, and so defuses and heals it.

His decipherment of the Cross is best approached through his idea of ‘sacred violence’. Violence has often historically justified itself by invoking some higher, sacred

or ‘God-willed’ necessity. The Roman Empire actually came to *divinise* its emperors, so that the punishment of those who threatened or defied the sacred order of Roman rule had to be a conspicuous exercise of sacred violence, both exemplary and terrible. ‘Bloody spectacle’ remained the ultimate foundation of the sacred majesty of Law and Order, even in England, up to and beyond Shakespeare’s time.

Violence is present in animal nature. It is present, before that, in the natural forces set in play in the coming-to-be of the physical cosmos: think of the ‘Big Bang’. But violence in humans is special. Animals practise a self-regulating violence: they kill, but only as driven by vital *need*, in order to survive. They prefigure human violence in competing for territory, mates and food, and for the dominance that ensures a competitive advantage. But their conflicts are limited in intensity and duration: animals rarely fight to the death.

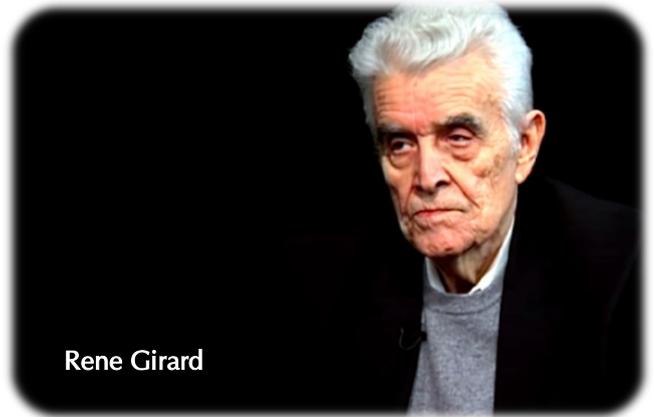
In humans, the same rivalries bring into play *imagination, empathy and desire*. Human violence is enhanced by “mimetic” reciprocity (‘tit for tat’, ‘an eye for an eye’), and can become vendetta. When we lose, we humans don’t lose interest in the conflict; it is then that we most remember, not just the harm done, but also the humiliation suffered. We fight in pure self-assertion, leaving behind the original objects and issues of the conflict. We sacralise the causes for which we fight.

So why has human violence not destroyed the race? Girard’s answer is that early human groups stumbled upon a collective practice by which the murder of an arbitrarily chosen (and therefore entirely ‘innocent’) scapegoat victim could defuse the rivalries and conflicts that threatened social implosion. They discovered the idea of a lightning conductor securing them against their own propensity to rivalry, conflict and violence. If the rage of all-against-all could be converted into a fury of all-against-one, the group was preserved... until the next crisis.

Our language dimly remembers this distant drama of origin; we ‘pass the buck’ because no-one wants to be the animal sacrificed as a scapegoat.

The scapegoat murder became institutionalised as *ritual blood sacrifice*. The outcome then sought was no longer merely the bonding effect of all-made-one at the expense of the scapegoat victim. Ceremonially developed, it became also the source of a catharsis (purgation) perceived as conjuring up the sacred. We apprehend something of its potency from Greek tragedy. This ritual survival mechanism blossomed into a form of *salvation*, complete, eventually, with the requisite gods (lots of them) to bestow it.

Such is the bonding-and-binding system from which the institutions of ancient societies were entirely derived. Politely disagreeing with other accounts of human origins, Girard maintains that ‘humanity is born out of the religious dimension of things’.



Rene Girard

Cont...

Nobody who has read Darwin with respect will dismiss out of hand this account of human origins. But such ideas do little or nothing for human self-esteem....Despite cogent evidence from all over the world, we prefer to imagine human sacrifice to have been limited to a few South American tribes...; and we pass by its huge significance for the immense problem of *how, in evolutionary time, we all became human.*

Jesus lifts the veil of our self-deception. Bringer and bearer of the Kingdom, he must confront the basic ideas of "natural religion" as constituted by 'founding murder', together with the consequences buried deep in the heart of all human ways and systems.

Denouncing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Jesus compares them to those monumental whitewashed tombs which they are busy erecting to the prophets, whom the leaders of historic Israel, have done to death in order to avoid hearing them (Matthew 23: 27-36). Jesus is undoubtedly signing his own death warrant.; for he here predicts publicly that his adversaries are bound to go the way their predecessors have always gone. They will, in their turn, but now apocalyptically, exclude and murder even the long-expected Messiah of God.

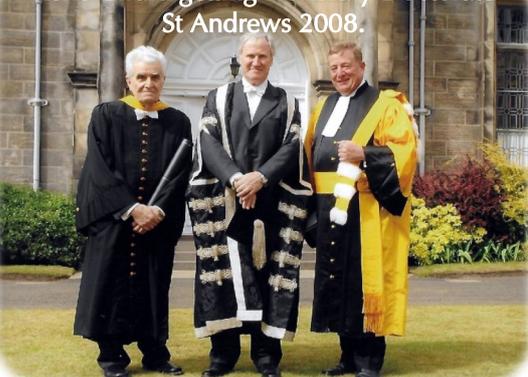
In John (8:43-44), Jesus indicts them of spiritual solidarity with Satan, the father of murder and lies. Girard comments: 'John's text goes further than the others in disentangling the founding mechanisms... 'Satan' denotes the founding mechanism itself'. He is the name given to the foundational principle of sacred violence governing human affairs: that hidden impulse of blood sacrifice, covering up its own violence with myths, lies, denials and ongoing further violence.

Does Girard imply that Jesus himself is thinking of a specifically *Darwinian* emergence of humankind as such? No; Darwin simply makes it, for us Moderns, easier than it was for the Pharisees to understand the genesis in historic time of the pattern of meaning Jesus is declaring, as he recalls the very first murder, of Abel in Genesis (there are echoes of similar foundational murders in all the world's mythologies). Jesus undoubtedly has in mind Leviticus 16, with its *one scapegoat* and its *one pure offering*, and the victimised Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

The reference to Abel is conclusive. Abel is not a canonical prophet of Israel; *but he is*, within Biblical horizons, the primordial human victim of a universally human 'founding murder'. He exemplifies all innocent victims of sacred violence, in all times, the world over.

The Passion will reveal hidden things. First: the principle of sacred violence and founding murder. This is seen in the scapegoating Jewish authorities ('it is expedient that one man die'); in the Jewish and Roman powers that be; in the crowd, veering into a lynch-mob, baying for innocent blood. Which scapegoat shall it be: Jesus or Barabbas? Which Victim to assuage the imagined Wrath? The same pattern is replicated in the disciples, swept along in the storm; in the brutalising and taunting soldiers; in the jeering crowds; even in the cursing thief crucified alongside Jesus.

But then we see the crisis revealing another dimension, another enacted reality: something which overcomes that untruth, and which shines forth in the space thus de-mystified: namely, the Love of God.



Looking over the shoulder of Rene Girard, as he himself, from the time of his conversion, looks over Jesus' shoulder, we can see the deeper pattern now declared which has been 'hidden from the foundation of the world'.

Jesus consents to enter into the age-old scenario of founding murder... as Victim: to display that process at work in his people and in humankind at large; and to reveal to all humans its nothingness in relation to the ultimate reality of the love of God; and so to heal at source our deepest and most disabling wound.

Prof. Paul Gifford is a Lay Reader at St Peter's Wellesbourne. His recent book Towards Reconciliation: Understanding Violence and the Sacred after Rene Girard is published by Lutterworth Press (James Clarke), Cambridge. See further details and video interview with Rowan Williams on publisher's website.



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The Revd Diane Patterson	01789 266 453
The Revd Jenny Rowland	01789 415 548
The Venerable Brian Russell	01789 266 316
The Revd Roger Taylor	01789 778 471
The Revd Graham Wilcox	01789 551 759

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Helen Warrillow	01789 298 928	Gill Price	07963 453 386

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St. Helen's, Clifford Chambers	Pat Woolvin	01789 264 256

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Bell Ringers	Charles Wilson	01789 295 467
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Trinity Ladies	Gina Lodge	01789 204 850
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Friends of St Helen's Church	Sarah Crang	01789 297 876
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PCC Treasurer	Mike Warrillow	01789 298 928
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Home Communion	Steve Jarvis	01789 266 316
Stewardship Officer	Chris Kennedy	01789 299 785
Trinity Players	Ursula Russell	01789 204 923
Trinity Tots	Phil Harper	07791 005 696
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	Diane Edwards	01789 296 396
Churchyard Maintenance		
Volunteer Team	Lindsay MacDonald	01789 293 110

NEW FUNDING INITIATIVE BY STRATFORD-UPON-AVON IN BLOOM

With Spring just around the corner, Stratford-upon-Avon in Bloom is gearing up for another year of splendid floral displays all around the town centre. This year's colour scheme will be in vibrant and cheering shades of pink.

Our horticultural contractors, Blenheim Nurseries, will soon be planting up our hanging baskets in the town centre, and in a new fund-raising initiative for 2021 we are inviting people to dedicate a hanging basket to the memory of a loved one.

So many of us have lost friends and family members over the last difficult twelve months, and this has often been all the harder because we have not always been able to say goodbye in the way we would have wished. So we hope that you will consider sponsoring a living memorial of one of our lovely hanging baskets in the town centre, to lift your spirits, and everyone else's too, every time you pass by.

The cost will be £30 for a memorial plaque with the wording of your choice. The money raised will go towards funding this year's activities by Stratford-upon-Avon in Bloom, including our annual competition for Stratford gardens large and small, details of which will be announced in the next few weeks.

For details of how to make your hanging basket dedication, please contact Stratford-upon-Avon in Bloom Deputy Chair, Dr Rosalind Winter:
rosalindwinter@btinternet.com

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die"

John 11: 25~26

Photograph from St Helen's Church, Clifford Chambers



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If you would like to join us, please contact Hilary on 07786 195498 – we'd love to have you.