

REFLECTIONS

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments', says Jesus. What makes us do what we are told? One reason may be fear of consequences if we do not. 'If you don't stop snatching the remote control, you will have no TV for a week'. Sanctions change, but they are still powerful – up to a point. Even in adulthood, we may keep to a speed limit for fear of being fined. Such fear used to be a part of religious indoctrination: fear of ex-communication or of hell.

Perhaps a better reason is respect for a teacher or leader, to the extent that we want to do things like they do. Many of us are still baking a cake or making a pudding the way our mother did, because it was so delicious, or doing things the way we were taught in school. In terms of faith, this is a bit like following Jesus or being a Christian because it makes sense to us, and is a good way to live.

Yet the most powerful and lasting motivation is love of a person, or a cause – perhaps a country. In the second war, people gave their lives for a better future or for love of their country. In our private lives, we do things out of love for one another – even things we might not otherwise do. Deep love of God is the most powerful motivation for doing the things he asks of us, even if they are costly or don't seem at face value to make sense.

It is this sort of deep commitment that Paul is urging on the Athenians in our reading from Acts. Theirs was a sophisticated society. They liked to keep their options open, even in matters of religion. It was a society perhaps a little like ours, where strong alignment with a particular religious view can be viewed with suspicion.

Yet some benefits only come from lasting commitment, whether in a marriage, or a long-term friendship. In terms of faith, Jesus tells us that those who love him will be loved by His Father, and will receive his Spirit. Whilst we are all God's children and loved by Him, this Spirit lives fully in those who are truly committed.

Going deeper

In this gospel passage we are led to think about the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit. The language of abiding in God echoes the preceding passage (John 14: 2), which we heard last week. It also picks up the word 'abide' from an earlier passage where Jesus describes himself as the bread of life and looks forward to the Eucharist (John 6:56). The promise in all these passages is that there is no separation between Jesus, God his Father and those who are believers. It is the Holy Spirit of God that facilitates this relationship.

I wonder...

how you find your life has changed through on-going faith commitment.

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES ONLINE

Sunday - Live

9.30am Zoom Holy Communion President: Paula Griffiths

10.00am Zoom Holy Communion President: John Saxon

Pre-recorded (youtube)

Act of Worship Leader: Alex Jeewan

Tuesday - Live

5.00pm Zoom Evening Prayer Leader: Joe Hordern

Wednesday - Live

9.30am Zoom Holy Communion Alex Jeewan Caroline Currer

Thursday - Live - Ascension Day

9.30am Holy Communion President: Paula Griffiths

8.00pm Holy Communion President: John Saxon

Youtube Act of Worship Leader: Alex Jeewan

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Mon 18th	Morning Psalm 65 & Luke 6:27-38 Evening Psalm 121
Tue 19th	Morning Psalm 126 & Luke 6:39-end Evening Psalm 128 & 1 Peter 4:12-end
Wed 20th	Morning Psalm 132 & Luke 7:1-10 Evening Psalm 15
Thurs 21st	Morning Psalm 110 & Hebrews 7:[11-25] <i>Ascension Day</i> Evening Psalm 8
Fri 22nd	Morning Psalm 81 & Luke 7:11-17 Evening Psalm 145
Sat 23rd	Morning Psalm 47 & Luke 7:18-35 Evening Psalm 85

The Grapevine

COVERING THE PARISHES OF SAFFRON WALDEN, WIMBISH,
DEBDEN, ASHDON AND HADSTOCK.

Sixth Sunday of Easter
17th May 2020

Collect

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

First Reading: Acts 17.22-31

Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring." Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

Gospel: John 14.15-21

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'



See St Mary's church, SW, website at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org to find out more.



Please 'Like' our Facebook page so we reach more people! Click on the link on our website, or go to: www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In May please pray for:
Sewards End & Little Walden C of E, Radwinter Primary School

The family and friends of those who have died recently:
Kenneth Mark, Richard Pennington

EVENTS

ASCENSION DAY Thursday 21st May We have two live Zoom communion services at 9.30am and 8.00pm and a youtube service. Full details on the weekly email bulletin.

THY KINGDOM COME May 21st - May 31st 2020 Join the global wave of prayer calling all Christians to pray between Ascension and Pentecost for more people to come to know the love and peace of Jesus Christ. We will have range of online activities and prayer stations available on the website.

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

It was good to commemorate and indeed celebrate VE Day last Friday – albeit in a rather limited way. Like others, we enjoyed a 'socially distant' street party and the flags and bunting on show. The TV coverage reminded me that after the war, there was research into what made the difference in terms of adjustment and mental wellbeing for those who had survived the concentration camps. Two factors emerged as significant: a sense of control and a sense of coherence. In other words, those who felt they had some element of control within the situation, however small, and those people who could see some meaning in the situation.

Andy wrote last week about the overall loss of control that we are all feeling at present. The eagerly awaited words from Boris Johnson on Sunday last may have helped a little, but still much is very uncertain. Yet if it was possible even in the death camps to find some sense of control (perhaps over their own reactions, or by hoarding a little food), we too can surely find some aspects of daily life that are in our control. I know that the number of people learning a language has increased at this time, and some people locally are doing amazing things sewing bunting and even PPE equipment. Establishing a daily routine can help, as can getting a garden in order or doing jobs that have been waiting a while. These small things can help us in human terms, although as Andy suggested last week, there is a bigger issue about the extent to which we are ever in ultimate control of our lives –and indeed, whether we should aspire to be.

The other factor was called 'a sense of coherence'. This is about seeing the situation as having meaning of some kind. In the research, it didn't seem to matter what meaning people clung to, but as Christians we would say that it is our faith that gives our lives meaning (even if we don't always or even ever fully see it). In the present situation, some may see this time as one when we are re-discovering the value of community. Others may see it as an opportunity to deepen trust in God. I wonder what meaning it has for you? On Sunday, Bishop Roger was asked what he had learned about himself during this time – perhaps a useful question for us all.

Our situation is a long way from those wartime experiences or death camps, but these two factors have been found to be relevant in many situations of loss. May you find both meaning and purpose to strengthen you during this on-going time of uncertainty.

With love and prayers
Caroline Curren

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Lord, speak to us when life is uncertain and seems bereft of meaning and purpose. May your Holy Spirit direct our steps, give light to our path and lead us in your eternal way. **Amen**

NEWS

ALL CHURCHES IN THE TEAM AND THE PARISH OFFICE REMAIN CLOSED until further notice in accordance with national guidelines.

EMAIL BULLETINS We are issuing regular email bulletins that highlight information from the website, attach the Grapevine and service sheet and provide the Zoom links for live services that weekend. Please email Dawn at office@stmaryssaffronwalden.org if you would like to be added to the distribution list.

WORSHIP ONLINE There are several ways of joining in our team worship which can be accessed from links on St Mary's Church at Home webpage.

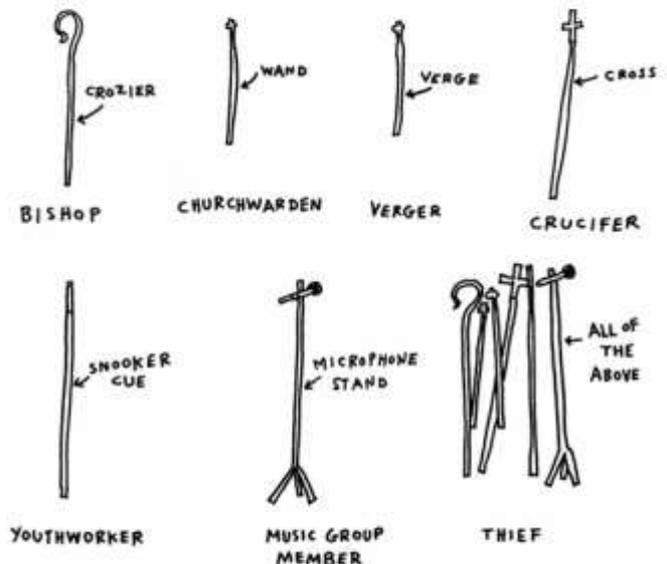
<http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/churchathome>
You can watch a pre-recorded services via youtube and you can participate in live Zoom Services led from various locations in the team. The service sheets used for these services and Grapevine are also available on the webpage. If you would like technical help in setting up Zoom, please contact Gerald Gardner gerald.gardner@ntlworld.com or Steve Hasler s.hasler@btopenworld.com

THE REVEREND JOHN SAXON has been appointed Team Vicar with responsibility for Debden and Wimbish. His licensing will take place via Zoom on **Tuesday 2nd June** at 5.30pm. *Ursula Lyons*

TAP TWINNING How many times have you washed your hands today; it could be 10 times. We are fortunate to have access to clean running water. Not so in many parts of the world; so how can they fight COVID 19. Tearfund are working hard to provide these resources. They have a Tap Twinning - the cost is £60. To find out more go to www.toilettwinning.org/taptwinning If you donate a pound every time you wash your hands you could raise the cost in under a week. *Gill Caswell*

CARTOON BY DAVE WALKER

HOW TO RECOGNISE PEOPLE
BY THE KIND OF STICK THEY ARE CARRYING



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