

REFLECTIONS

A Reflection

Jesus tells the Pharisees that he comes to give life – abundant life. For me, this recalls his first miracle, when Jesus turned water into wine, not just a little wine, but gallons of it! The very word ‘abundance’ is rich, overflowing with goodness. And this is the sort of life shared by the first disciples in our reading from Acts – so full and joyful that they attracted many others to join them.

In our gospel reading today, Jesus also describes himself as the gate for his sheep. This image is of the way in which shepherds would guard the flock by sleeping across the entrance to the sheepfold. Not only does he keep them safe, he then also leads them out and goes ahead of them. So we have two images here relevant to our current situation. An image of being kept safe in a secure place, but also of having a trusted leader who goes before us as we move on. We can in confidence live a life that is full to the brim. This is what the disciples experienced in the days after Pentecost. From a time of uncertainty and fear, we see them now boldly practising and sharing their faith.

One thing that we learn about abundant life is surely that it is not just about us as individuals. It is not about me having more and more whilst others have less. The disciples shared all that they had with each other – something quite shocking since their group included men and women of all kinds, slaves and free. The current situation is teaching us much about the ways in which we depend on others for wellbeing and even for life.

Neither is abundant life just about the future - a promise that things will get better. It is about the source of our strength, about being open, rather than closed, in our hearts. We know that even people whose lives are very constrained – perhaps by age, or illness - can be overflowing with joy. Abundant life is a quality that we can develop and nurture even in lockdown – something that will overflow as and when opportunities allow. If we learn to know Him better now, we will be empowered and led by Him whatever the future brings.

Going deeper

The other reading set for today is 1 Peter 2: 19-25. This also uses the image of Jesus as the shepherd, but speaks too of the importance of endurance, and of bearing unjust suffering as he did. And the Psalm set is Psalm 23. Here we are told that the Lord is our shepherd who gives us good things but is also with us in the ‘valley of the shadow of death’. At the current time, there is comfort in these familiar words.

I wonder ...

What abundant life means to you now – and what it might mean in the future?

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES ONLINE

Sunday - Live

9.30am Zoom Holy Communion President: Paula Griffiths
Preacher: Caroline Curren

10am Zoom Holy Communion President: John Saxon

Pre-recorded (youtube)

Act of Worship Leader: Alex Jeewan
H2H Youth Service Leader: Aftershock

Tuesday - Live

5pm Zoom Evening Prayer Leader: Mike Felgate

Wednesday - Live

9.30am Zoom Holy Communion Alex Jeewan Caroline Curren

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Mon 4th	Morning Psalm 103 & Luke 2:41-end Evening Psalm 114
Tue 5th	Morning Psalm 139 & Luke 3:1-14 Evening Psalm 116 & Ephesians 4:17-end
Wed 6th	Morning Psalm 135 & Luke 3:15-22 Evening Psalm 47
Thurs 7th	Morning Psalm 118 & Luke 4:1-13 Evening Psalm 85
Fri 8th	Morning Psalm 33 & Luke 4:14-30 Evening Psalm 36
Sat 9th	Morning Psalm 34 & Luke 4:31-37 Evening Psalm 84

The Grapevine

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

Fourth Sunday of Easter
3rd May 2020

Collect

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: Acts 2.42-47

Many were baptized and were added to the community. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Gospel: John 10.1-10

Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'



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:
Roger Morgan

EVENTS

Sam and Rachel are delighted to **WELCOME THEIR DAUGHTER, MAGDALENE ROSE**, into their family. Magdalene was born on Monday 27th April at 11 o'clock, weighing 7lb 3oz. All are doing well and are very grateful for all your prayers and good wishes.

NEW WEDNESDAY HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE at 9.30am starts this week. Check the bulletin for the Zoom link. **Sunday 10th May 9.30am THE BISHOP OF COLCHESTER, THE RT. REVD. ROGER MORRIS** will be preaching at a special Team Zoom service at 9.30am. All welcome!

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

Having worked most of my life in and around the social care sector, one of the striking things recently has for me been the rather belated recognition of the importance of social care. Unlike the NHS, many people have been rather ambivalent about social care, with periodic scandals and perhaps for some a hope that we won't personally ever have to rely on it. It has been called a 'Cinderella' service and relies - even more than the NHS - on workers from abroad. Both social care and NHS had before the current situation been in increasing difficulty, with severe staffing shortages.

Today's reading from Acts reminds us of the importance of interdependence, and the present crisis is bringing this home to us in striking ways. In our personal lives as well as socially, we realise how much we depend on other people; how much we owe not only to those who care for the sick, but also to those routine services that we take for granted, like refuse collection and the postal service. Will the coming years bring a resurgence of a spirit of independence, or can we hold on to this sense that society is about living together, and being thankful for each other, rather than believing that we can go it alone?

The Acting Bishop of Chelmsford, Bishop Peter, has suggested that we consider what new things are being revealed to us in this strange time, and how we are going to do things differently and effectively after this time of lockdown is over. These are important questions for us all, both personally, as a community and as a church.

Some of you reading this may have experienced personal tragedy in the past week. Many have active concerns for family and friends - either for their health or perhaps for livelihood or for young people missing final exams. For you, this personal pain and worry is more real than any abstract thoughts or struggles with lockdown. We can do little to change that, but please do be assured of our thoughts and prayers. I know that there are local networks of prayer and support, but members of the clergy team (see list on opposite page) are all willing to supplement these. Just get in touch to share your concerns, big or small.

With love and prayers

Caroline

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Lord, as your love was not bound by the constraints of the tomb, so too we know that the abundant life we have in you knows no constraints or boundaries. In joy and in sorrow, in the current circumstances and even in the depths of pain, may we know your presence and comfort as we seek to experience the abundant life that you came to give us.

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

May's edition of **PARISH NEWS** is available on the website at <http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/parishnews>

The Church of England has opened a free telephone line for the lonely and vulnerable where they can listen to messages of hope and select whether they want to hear hymns, a service, prayers or reflections as well as advice on Covid-19. Callers will hear a special greeting from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Please do pass this on to anyone you think might be interested. The number is 0800 804 8044. **Mothers Union NEW DATE FOR WEEKEND AWAY AT BELSEY BRIDGE: 16th - 18th July 2021** I'm sure it will be no surprise that our weekend away in June has been cancelled. All those who were booked on this weekend should have had an email or phone call from Sarah Nicholas. If not please contact her on s.nicholas180@gmail.com or 01799 584617. We feel it is important to have something to look forward to at this difficult time and we have therefore rolled our booking over to next year. Details are on the website

<http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/weekendaway2021>.
If you haven't already booked there are places available.

CARTOON BY DAVE WALKER



MINISTRY TEAM

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