

Lock-down Pt. 2

PLEASE NOTE the Remembrance Service is now online (there is NO outside service at the Memorial Hall). It will be streamed live on Facebook at 10:45am Sun 8 November and available later on Facebook and Vimeo (you do not need a Facebook account to watch the video live or later). [Click here to watch online](#)

I write this letter as we enter our second lock-down because of the COVID pandemic. For some it is just an inconvenience- not being able to eat out or take the short break we had promised ourselves. But for others, it is deeply unsettling and the onset of yet more anxiety and fear for the future. For those already isolated and stretched to breaking point it can seem like the last straw. Yes, we perhaps know more of what to expect than the first time round, but the prospect of a month's lock-down is a gloomy prospect indeed. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York recently published a letter encouraging all of us to consider responses determined by our Christian faith:

First, let's be calm. By only buying what we need and not hoarding, or by reaching out to our neighbours as we did during the first lockdown, we can be stronger together in ways that are impossible if we go it alone. When things go wrong -as they always will with such complex challenges -let us look for good and right ways forward together.

Secondly, let's be courageous. There are many reasons to be fearful at the moment, but the story of Christ calming the waves calls us to give our fears to Jesus and have faith in Him. The British willingness just to get on with things is one of our very best characteristics –let us not be paralysed by fear. We will all need each other's courage in the months to come.

Thirdly, let's be compassionate. So many of us are holding so much pain -our own and the pain of those we love. We will need to be gentle, kind and patient with each other. In the first wave we showed we are a nation of compassion and kindness. Let's dig deep and keep that love for our neighbours strong in this second time of struggle.

May we help one another in that spiritual task, to be calm, courageous and compassionate as followers of Jesus in a time of great uncertainty and stress.



The Persecuted Church

The plight of other Christians in many parts of the world puts our own experience into some sort of perspective. What we have felt during lock-down is a common experience for many- not being able to worship freely, restricted movement etc. There are many organisations that help us to broaden our vision of the worldwide Church. International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) will be celebrated on Sunday 15th November 2020 in the UK. More details here: <https://www.csw.org.uk/idop>



The 25th November is 'Red Wednesday' when many churches will be highlighting the human rights abuses of Christians and others. Public buildings will be turning red and Parliament will be petitioned for this vital cause. More information here: <https://acnuk.org/our-campaigns/redwednesday/>

World Church

On the theme of the world church, please do pray for Ram and Keshari Prasad as they work for the Gospel in Nepal. As a church we recently sent £544 for their vital relief work- they thank us for that gift. The country has been hit hard by COVID, making the plight of the poor even harder. Very sadly, Keshari lost her own sister at only 38 years of age to the virus. Please pray for them in their grief.



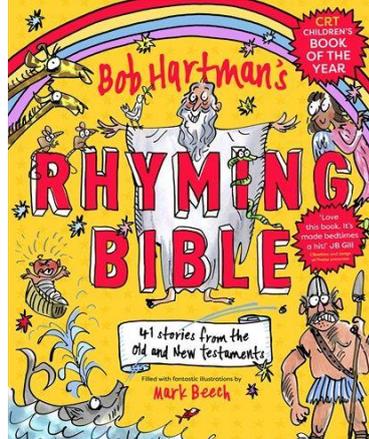
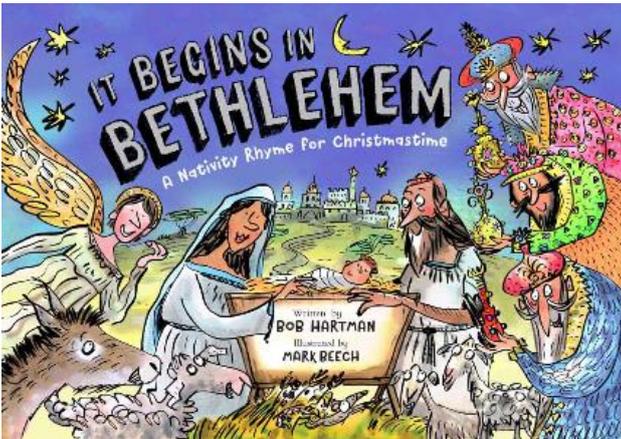
We are also asked to pray for our link diocese of Dornakal in south India. Bishop Prasada Rao, who visited our church a few years ago, passed away recently and they are to elect a new bishop as leader of the Church in that diocese. Please pray for a good and godly appointment in Feb 2021.

'It Begins in Bethlehem...'

There is a wealth of great Christmas resources available for children and youth. Why not have a look at this range of nativity rhymes written by the wonderful Bob Hartman? There is a booklet, a nativity play based on the book, as well as an animated video, all courtesy of the Bible Society. Great fun!

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/christmas/>

(NB. You can find many other great books and videos by Bob Hartman on the internet...)



Advent Windows (December 1st to 28th, 3.15 – 9pm each evening)



This year the season of Advent and Christmas will be tinged with a regret that we cannot do things as normal- no physical crib service on Christmas Eve, no turning on of the Christmas lights in the Market Place, no Christingle service in a darkened church. Many churches are therefore looking for different ways to celebrate the hope we have as Christians. Mary Bainbridge tells us about the 'Advent Windows' that will be lit by Lechlade volunteers on a rota: *...from about 3.15pm, when children come out of school, until 9pm and then... each subsequent evening, just as the windows on an ordinary Advent calendar are opened in turn.*

The Living Advent Calendar will be advertised from early November by posters around the town and in school. Families will be invited to go round as and when they wish to see the windows and take part in a competition to write down a word displayed on a card in the window...

Online services and Advent & Christmas in 2020

We cannot meet physically in November, so we will be having our services online and live streaming on Facebook Live - www.facebook.com/stlawrencelechlade/videos

The orders of service will as always be available on the website and sent out via email. I know that not everyone has access to the internet, but this still seems the best way to communicate and worship together. Please do contact the Parish Office if you have difficulties with the online services.

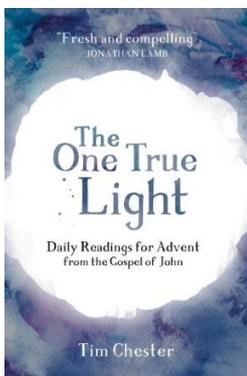
It is incredibly difficult to plan ahead this year, not knowing the outcome of the latest lock-down or whether we will have further government restrictions. Yet it is still hugely important to let our local community know that the local Church is still there for them- serving, loving and praying. We are still planning to distribute our Christmas card around the parish, but with a message of hope and please check the website (www.stlawrencelechlade.org.uk) for up to date details of festive events.

If it is likely that we can have services on Christmas Day, then a free ticketing system will be in a place. Social distancing means that our seating capacity is severely reduced and we may have to repeat the services on Christmas morning. We want to have as many people as possible worshipping on Christmas Day, but doing so in a safe and responsible way.

Kathy Newton is still hoping to organise a recorded crib service this year. Depending on restrictions, it is hoped that local children will take part in a nativity play video, which can be viewed online. Please do pray for all the arrangements and practical planning that needs to happen for this- watch this space.

And finally...

Prayer and mission make up the foundations of our life in Christ together. Why not use the season of Advent to go deeper in your faith? 'The One True Light' by Tim Chester is our parish Advent Book for 2020. It consists of 24 very readable and accessible meditations from the Gospel of John. A bargain at £3 a copy! *** Please contact the vicar for a copy and I will arrange delivery to your door! You won't regret it... ***



It is hard to invite friends and neighbours to Christmas services this year, so why not try a different approach – maybe a Christmas book, tract, CD or card with a message of hope and joy? There are plenty to choose from. Try here for a start: <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/resources-for-christmas-outreach-in-2020>

I finish with a Church of England prayer for the world:

Almighty Father,
whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of all:
govern the hearts and minds of those in authority,
and bring the families of the nations,
divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin,
to be subject to his just and gentle rule;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Every blessing to you in the strong name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Revd Andrew Cinnamond

Vicar of Lechlade, Eastleach and Southrop