

REFLECTIONS

Isaiah's cry: 'O that you would tear open the heavens and come down', expresses a feeling that we may well experience if our world were to come crashing down and God seem a million miles away. It is as if the prophet was saying: 'God, don't just stand there, do something!' It captured the anguish and frustration felt in a time of national crisis when God was silent or seemingly inactive. It is a cry to God that has been made countless times since; it represents probably the biggest barrier to belief in his existence. The 75th anniversary of the Nuremberg Trials has brought back to public attention the atrocities of the Nazi regime: where was God, when millions of men, women and children were being murdered? If we are wise we will not try to give a neat answer, but remain quiet in the face of a mystery. In the sixteenth century Martin Luther taught us to look for God in the mystery of the cross of Christ. The appalling scene which was Calvary - not somewhere we would choose to look - is paradoxically the place where we will see God most clearly: in its suffering, humiliation, defeat and abandonment. Luther spoke of 'the crucified and hidden God', who isn't insulated from the world's griefs but rather embraces them, taking the weight of them upon his own shoulders. Although seemingly hidden, God was at work at Calvary in the most profound way, for the good of us all.

Going deeper...

Despite Isaiah's cry of anguish, he holds on to his belief in God and God's sovereignty over all things. And it is interesting to note that centuries later, as Jesus is baptised in the Jordan, he sees 'the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him' (Mark 1.10): confirmation of his true identity and a sign that God is about to turn the world upside down.

I wonder...

In my darkest moments, when my faith is tested, shall I demand explanations of mysteries, or will I look expectantly for signs of God acting in surprising ways, for my good?

Andy Colebrooke

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES ONLINE

There are no services in any of our churches this week due to the latest government restrictions. The following services are available across the team - full details on the website and the email bulletin.

SUNDAY

9.15am Christingle (Zoom) Leader: John Saxon
9.30am Holy Communion (Zoom) President: Paula Griffiths,
Preacher: Caroline Curren
10.00am Morning Prayer (Zoom) Leader: Alex Jeewan
10.00am St Mary's Holy Communion (Youtube/Zoom)
President: Michael Lovegrove
6.30pm Hadstock Advent Reflection (Zoom)
Leader: Paula Griffiths

TUESDAY

5.00pm Evening Prayer (Zoom) Leader: Alan Curren

WEDNESDAY

9.30am Holy Communion (Zoom) President: Caroline Curren

SUNDAY 6TH DECEMBER subject to confirmation

St Mary's Saffron Walden

8am Holy Communion (BCP) President: Alex Jeewan
in church plus Zoom/YouTube
4pm **CHRISTINGLE SERVICE** YouTube only
6.30pm **ADVENT CAROL SERVICE** YouTube only

Other services in Church

Wimbish 9.15am Holy Communion President: John Saxon
Hadstock 9.30am Family Service Leader: Paula Griffiths
Ashdon 9.30am Holy Communion President: Caroline Curren
Preacher: Alan Curren

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

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www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden



The Grapevine

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

First Sunday of Advent
29th November 2020

Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: Isaiah 64.1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil – to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity for ever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Gospel: Mark 13.24-37

Jesus said to his disciples: 'In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. 'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

Post Communion

O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In November please pray for: **All Saints, Ashdon, Wimbish and Debden Schools**
The family and friends of those who have died recently:
Tim Hardingham, William Bentley, Val Clark, Beatrice Piper
Tim's funeral will be held at St Mary's, Wendens Ambo at 11am on 2nd December and will be livestreamed. All are welcome to join online – please see the zoom link on Friday's bulletin.

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

Is it not rather intriguing that each new church year begins on Advent Sunday, a sombre season of no flowers, no sung Gloria, and only purple coverings? Why not start with something momentous like Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, or Christ bursting from the tomb, or even Pentecost which, after all, marks the birth of the church? Yet each new year starts with a strange kind of emptiness, a time, it is said, for watching and waiting.

Waiting is something that does not come easily today: Amazon and credit cards have taken much of the waiting out of our wanting. However, being prepared to wait is instructive. For example, a naturalist may wait all night to catch one glimpse of a family of badgers or an owl in flight. She does it because these sightings mean much to her, whereas a person who values little, seldom waits for anything.

Also, difficult though waiting is, it does heighten our appreciation when gifts arrive. In his book *An Evil Cradling* Brian Keenan recounts his 4½ years of captivity in Beirut. One day, after many months of deprivation, living on the greyest diet, he is presented with a bowl of apricots, oranges, and a banana. He says he felt a joy so complete, it was beyond joy. The colours captivated him, especially the oranges: 'The colour orange, the colour, the colour, my God the colour orange. Before me is a feast of colour. I feel myself begin to dance, slowly, I am intoxicated by colour. ... Such wonder, such absolute wonder in such an insignificant fruit.' He felt such joy he couldn't bring himself to eat them. He describes something close to worship. So, perhaps our year starts where it does to help us to see what is truly important and lead us into deeper worship and profounder joy. Waiting and watching are the signs of hearts open and alive to God, necessary prerequisites to true worship.

God, too, is not averse to waiting: 'Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.' (Rev.3:20) God's waiting reveals our significance to him.

O happy new year!

With love and prayers,
Andy Colebrooke

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

O God of surprises, whose goodness never fails, help us to see our security is in you. Journey with us beyond the familiar and into the unknown. Help us to trust you with the future, chapter by chapter, until the entire story is written.

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Mon 30th	Morning Psalm 47 & John 12:20-32 Evening Psalm 87
Tue 1st Dec	Morning Psalm 80 & Revelation 20 Evening Psalm 74 & Matthew 12:22-37
Wed 2nd	Morning Psalm 7 & Revelation 21:1-8 Evening Psalm 77
Thurs 3rd	Morning Psalm 42 & Revelation 21:9-21 Evening Psalm 40
Fri 4th	Morning Psalm 25 & Revelation 21:22-22:5 Evening Psalm 17
Sat 5th	Morning Psalm 9 & Revelation 22:6-end Evening Psalm 27

NEWS

Appointment of Team Rector

We are delighted to announce the appointment of our new Team Rector, Revd. Jeremy Trew. Jeremy is currently the vicar of St Gregory's, Seaton and St Michael's Beer in Devon. He and his wife, Alison, will be moving to Saffron Walden in the spring and he will be formally welcomed to start his ministry at a service at St Mary's in early March. You can find a letter from Jeremy and some photos on our website. Please pray for him and his family as they prepare to leave their current parishes.

There will be NO SERVICES IN CHURCH this week - however we will continue to provide services online and accessible by telephone. We hope to resume some services in church on Sunday 6th as shown on the back page—subject to govt guidelines. Look out for online streamed CHRISTINGLE and ADVENT CAROL SERVICES streamed from St Mary's next week.

ONLINE SERVICES are listed on the back page. Full joining details are available on the weekly email bulletin and on the website. Please email Dawn if you would like to be added to the bulletin distribution list.

LIVE WORSHIP by phone - you don't need a computer or tablet to join our services from home. If you would like to know more please contact Judith Hasler on 525041 or John Saxon on 541619.

PRIVATE PRAYER During this period of lockdown, St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden, is open on Wednesdays and Sundays between 2pm and 4pm. All Saints, Ashdon, is open every day. St Botolph's, Hadstock is open on Wednesdays between 1pm and 3pm.

MANY THANKS to everyone who purchased homemade jam from me this autumn. As a result, I have been able to donate £140 to the Building Project. I still have more jam for sale if anyone is still interested. Please telephone me on 521356.

Lesley A Green

BRIGHTEN YOUR CHRISTMAS! In order to support St Mary's as there's no church fair this year, I'm taking orders for a limited number of Crackers at £2 each (as last year).

Please email me with your order - dd.hoy@ntlworld.com - telling me how many crackers and numbers for male/female you need. Orders by the end of November please. **Diana Hoy IT'S TOO IMPORTANT NOT TO SEND A SHOEBOX.** This year it has been difficult to collect filled shoeboxes for vulnerable children across the world. However, you can still send a shoebox by going online and choosing what gifts you would like Operation Christmas child to put in the box for you! Go to shoebonline.samaritans-purse.org.uk or for help to do this, phone Mike and Judith Felgate 01799 524747.

LYNN TRENEARY'S LATEST NEWSLETTER Lynn is now back in Maridi having written her Newsletter, which is now on the website, just before she set off. I also have some hard copies so do get in contact with me if you would like one and I can deliver it to your door; my email is suewalker619@btinternet.com

STREET PASTORS are prayer walking in pairs in the town during lockdown – contact the Parish Office for more information on how to take part.

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

AMENDED PARISH OFFICE HOURS The Parish Administrator is available by phone or email on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays 9.30am - 12noon, but no longer on a Tuesday. The office is not currently open to personal callers.

MINISTRY TEAM

Parish Administrator: Dawn Saxon	01799 506024
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Pastoral Assistant: Judith Hasler	01799 525041
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Revd Alex Jeewan	01799 531153
Revd John Saxon	01799 541619
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