



St Peter & St Paul's Church, Cranfield

NEWS & DIARY

July 2020

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For more information on Cranfield Parish Church look online at:

www.cranfieldchurch.org

The Church In Cranfield



When the church in Cranfield is mentioned it is more than likely that reference is being made to the ancient building in Court Road. But the church is far more than the building. Never has that been truer than over the past three months since we had to close the building for the safety of all who attend it.

References to the church in the Acts of the Apostles always relate to the people, the early Christians who had become believers. “The churches were strengthened in their faith and grew daily in numbers.” (Acts 16:5). When we think of the church’s foundation we are reminded of the words of Jesus to Peter in Matthew’s gospel: “And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church.”

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic I hope we have demonstrated that we have been able to be a church without the building. We have held zoom prayer meetings and home group sessions. We have communicated to our church family by telephone calls. We have enjoyed watching other churches’ services as they live streamed. We have continued to manage church affairs by zoom and teleconference PCC meetings.

So, do we need the church building? Do we need that expensive pile of dead stones that constantly requires maintaining? Jesus never had a building – think of all the ministry we could do if we didn’t have to fund an ancient building!

It is true to say that we are often a little too fond of our building. We devote hours looking after the precious fabric but only use it on Sunday mornings and other infrequent occasions. I’m sure we can’t be accused of loving our building more than we love Jesus but our building should be a tool, not a false idol.

Over the past few months the building should have been the venue for celebrating a number of weddings and sadly an opportunity to say our goodbyes to those whose earthly lives have come to an end and, of course, for our regular Sunday worship. But the doors have been firmly locked.

Reverend Richard Coles, in his recent sermon from St Alban’s Abbey, emphasised that “matter matters.” It is great that we have been able to use modern technology to “meet” but it matters more that we meet together as the body of Christ to join together in prayer and worship. *Continued overleaf...*

The Church In Cranfield

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After all, Jesus said, “when two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Yes, despite its problems our beautiful ancient church matters and it is important that we are able to join together in worship at the earliest opportunity.

We should use every resource we have to serve God and our communities – including our church building.

Trevor Dimmock

Keeping Calm & Carrying On

The phone has been a godsend during these three months of lockdown. One call was from a dear friend who had been moved by Paul Robeson singing “There is a balm in Gilead”. She wondered if I knew its origins. I had to admit that I didn’t, but got out the trusty iPad. Gilead, now in modern-day Jordan, was the mountainous region east of the River Jordan. The Balm of Gilead was a rare perfume used medicinally and grown on a tree or shrub in that region. The expression came to be symbolic of a universal cure. We agreed that we all need a balm; something to soothe us, at this present time. This led me to look at the words of the song and to learn more about the life of Paul Robeson, himself, before reflecting on our needs today.

“There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead, to heal the sin-sick soul. If you can pray like Peter, If you can preach like Paul, Go home and tell your loved ones, He died to save us all.”

Paul Leroy Robeson was born in Princetown, New Jersey, in 1898. His father, William, had been born into slavery but had escaped from the plantation in his teens. The Atlantic Slave Trade was abolished in 1807 but, in America, slaves didn’t get their freedom until the ending of the Civil War in 1865. There was persistent racial segregation and intolerance which led to the Civil Rights Movement. Paul Robeson lived during this time. He experienced racism on the sports field and in his career as a lawyer which he had to abandon. He embarked on a stage career and performed on the London Stage in “Showboat”, even performing at Buckingham Palace in 1928. He wrote in his diary: “God watches over me and guides me. He’s with me and lets me fight my own battles and hopes I’ll win.” He died in 1976 in Philadelphia at the age of 77. Although new laws ending racial discrimination were passed in America in 1968, racial tensions persist today as we have seen in the “Black Lives Matter” movement following the death of George Floyd on 25th May.

So, what about our own battles? How can we find a soothing remedy for anxiety and tension? Talking helps. “A trouble shared is a trouble halved.” Some find music or art therapeutic. Doctors have been prescribing exercise and have more recently been promoting a “green prescription” of gardening or other outdoor activities. As Christians we know we can turn to Jesus for all our needs. We can joyfully accept His invitation to “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.” (*Matthew 11: 28*)

Dr Marjorie Cotton

Church Re-opening

Although the government has announced that churches may open for public worship, we are awaiting guidance from the diocese on how we can achieve this safely, particularly Holy Communion. Please see the church website for up-to-date information.

We are, however, delighted that from 2nd July the Church will be open at specific times for private prayer. There is a welcome notice on the door with safety instructions and hand sanitiser will be provided. At the time of writing, the opening times will be:

Sunday	2pm – 4pm
Tuesday	10am – 12 noon
Thursday	12 noon – 2pm

We cannot open for longer at this time as we do not have the volunteers to safely staff the building and to do the necessary cleaning. We will review this regularly.

Reflective Diary for July 2020

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Sunday 19th July – The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

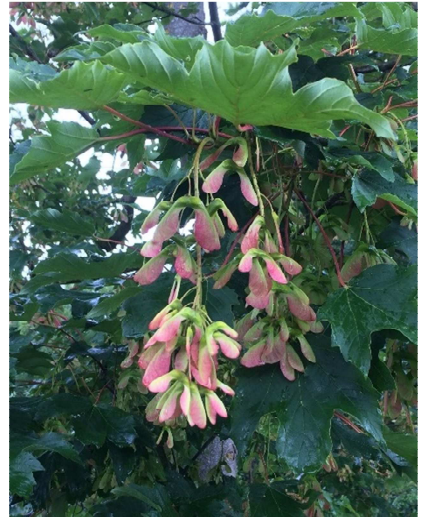
Genesis 28: 10-19a Jacob's Ladder.

Isaac had blessed Jacob. He sent him to find a wife from the house of his mother's father, from one of the daughters of her brother, Laban. On the way he stopped for the night and lay down, fell asleep: *And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.* (v 12)

Romans 8: 12-25 *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry "Abba! Father!" it is the very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.* (vs 14- 17)

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43 The Parable of the weeds of the field with interpretation.

"The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of the kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen! (vs 36-43)



Sunday 26th July – The Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Genesis 29: 15-28 Jacob serves Laban for seven years for his younger daughter, Rachel, whom he loves. Laban deceives him and gives him Leah, her older sister. Laban agrees to give him Rachel too, but he has to work for him for another seven years.

Romans 8: 26-39 *We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.* (v28)

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth nor anything in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (vs 35-39)

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52 A series of parables about the Kingdom of Heaven:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." (vs 31-33)

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." (v44)

"The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of fine value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." (v 45)

Reflective Diary for July 2020

The following are the Lectionary readings for the principal services during July. Selected passages are printed. The Old Testament readings relate to Abraham's offspring. Paul tells us that we should remember that we who believe are all descendents of Abraham. (*Galatians 3: 6-9*)

Paul's letter to the Romans is described as his masterpiece by Tom Wright, Bishop of Durham until 2010. He describes chapter 8 as one of the greatest chapters written by Paul or any other Christian writer.

The verses from Matthew's Gospel for the last three weeks are based on the parables – the first two with interpretations, the last leaving us to contemplate the immense potential of God's Kingdom.



Sunday 5th July – The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Genesis 24: 34-38, 42-49 Abraham's servant pledges to find a wife for Abraham's son, Isaac, from his own people. He prays that the one who offers him water for himself and his camels would be the one. Rebekah offers him the water and also hospitality. In this passage the servant explains the circumstances of his errand to Laban, Rebekah's brother. Rebekah agrees to return to become Isaac's wife.

Romans 7: 15-25a *I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate. (v15)*

The weakness of our human nature makes us susceptible to temptation but we have the help of God's grace, His undeserved, unconditional Love, to save us from ourselves.

Matthew 16: 16-19, 25-30 Jesus questions His disciples: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" The passage tells us Peter's reply: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (v 16)

Jesus tells his disciples: "if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? (vs 24-26)

Sunday 12th July – The Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Genesis 25: 19-34 This passage tells of the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah - Esau and Jacob - and how Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, the younger twin.

Romans 8: 1-11 *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. (vs 1,2)*

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. (v9)

Matthew 13: 1-19, 18-23 The parable of the sower and the interpretation.

"Hear the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for that which was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but only endures for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty and another thirty." (vs 18-23)

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