

Welcome everyone to St Andrew's Stewton Church Community Post 57. This coming week marks the first anniversary of this past year of lockdown and pandemic. Let us resolve to mark this moment and grow positively from this experience into a new hope filled future.

God does not leave us in the mess of our own making but supports us in our struggle to change.

Though we mess up our lives you do not turn your back.

Lord, have mercy.

We call out to you for change and renewal.

Christ, have mercy.

You are with us and will help us to grow and bear fruit.

Lord, have mercy.

**Ever present God, be with us in our isolation,
 be close to us in our distancing, be healing in our sickness,
 be joy in our sadness, assurance in our doubting, be light in our darkness.
 Be wisdom in our confusion, be solace and rest in our labouring,
 be consolation in our pain and grief, be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar.
 When the doors are reopening, protect our emerging into the light so we may,
 with the zeal of Pentecost inhabit our communities,
 take to heart the wisdom learned and speak of your goodness to an emerging world.
 For Jesus' sake. Amen.**

This weeks' scripture readings:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 The Lord promises to make a new covenant with his people, a covenant written on their hearts, which will bring a new intimacy with him and a new assurance of life in all its fullness.

Hebrews 5:5-10 God appoints Jesus, his Son, as high priest forever; he is made perfect through his suffering and he brings salvation to all who obey him

John 12:20-33 Some Gentile Greeks want to meet Jesus. Jesus' response is to say that his "hour has come" and to speak of his death in terms of his own glorification.

The reflection for today:

None of the other Gospels tell the story which we see in this Sunday's Gospel reading. Only St. John's. But in a sense perhaps that's not too hard to understand if we remember that John specifically focussed his Gospel to present the truth about Jesus in a way in which the Greeks could understand. So, he includes this incident when these Greeks came to Jesus.

Nor was it strange to hear of groups of wandering Greeks, tourists, I suppose we would call them today, turning up like this. Mainly because as a people they had a natural curiosity about the world around them but they also wanted to know about religion and philosophy-- to get to the bottom of things.

And of course, if some of them found themselves in Jerusalem, they would naturally want to visit the Temple. They may even have witnessed Jesus throwing out the traders and money changers a short while before and had become curious about someone who would act in this way.

And Jesus characteristically doesn't turn them away--he's always open to everyone but perhaps his response is not what they expected.

So, this time Jesus compares himself to a grain of wheat planted in the ground. Now that grain doesn't actually die when it's placed in the earth but changes come over it so that it is no longer recognisable as the seed that was there before. And when the time is right, it emerges from the ground as a new form altogether--as a green blade, which eventually becomes an ear of wheat to be harvested to provide food but also can be retained as seed corn to ensure another crop.



But perhaps what Jesus is actually saying here is that within each and every one of us there is potential - like that seed. But we need to let our personal ambitions die to become of any use to God and his ambitions for us.

So as Jesus was explaining to those Greeks, but also to us 2000 years later, that it is only by giving up the lives which **we** want that we can take on the new life which **God** wants for each one of us. But to know about that new life and what we as individuals should be doing next, we need to listen to, and be constantly alert for, God's word and prompting. The trouble is, not that God does not speak to us, He does but that we are so caught up with the frantic activity we call life, that we just haven't time to listen. And that's down to each and every one of us.

And a reminder. Last Sunday marked one year since we had a service in St. Andrew's, on March 15th. 2020. People continue to ask when we will re-open. The truth is that at the moment, we just don't know. Hopefully, these weekly e-mails, updates and regular phone calls, will in a small way at least have helped to keep our small community together through this difficult time. There is now at least a faint light at the end of the tunnel. We have all come so far, we now just have to carry on until the end.

So, stay safe and God bless you all until we can come together again.

Robert



The Lord our God knows our thoughts and needs before we voice them, but longs for us to share with him our prayers for the Church and the world.

Today we thank God for the blessings poured upon the Church particularly in China and pray that God might continue to bless his people there, that through them the whole nation might know of Jesus Christ.

We pray for other places in the world, known to God, if not to us, where God's people are persecuted and feel alone. May the Church grow as more and more people turn to Christ.

We pray, too, for countries like Britain in which the Church has been shrinking for many years, being replaced by a humanist secular culture. We ask that a new move of God's Spirit might embolden Christians to share their faith joyfully and meaningfully with others and that many might be drawn to become disciples of Christ. We pray that we may learn from this time of pandemic emerging as a body renewed to *BE* church in a new way appropriate to the needs of the 21st century rather than maintaining our spiritual comfort zones.

We bring before God the needs of any known to us for healing support and assurance, strength and courage to face the future especially naming *Joyce Terrett, David Barker, Ed Cox, Paul Clifford, Phyllis Clifford, Denise and Caroline, Mary, Lisa and Chris.*

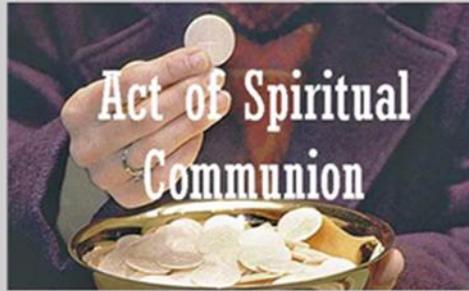
We remember those who have lived a life of faithfulness to the Lord and are now approaching the end of their lives and those who have died especially *Shirley Humphries* who died recently. Today may God encourage them with the assurance that new fruit comes as the seed dies.

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.



Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us
that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters
we do also for you:
give us the will to be the servant of others
as you were the servant of all,
and gave up your life and died for us,
but are alive and reign, now and for ever.

As we live the Christian life, dying to sin and living for righteousness, may we always know the peace of Christ, and be aware of the blessings God graciously showers on us each and every moment of our lives. **Amen.**



Lord Jesus, you are the Bread of Life,
may we always hunger for your word,
for your presence in our lives,
for the peace you alone can give,
and for the courage and confidence you inspire
without which in these times
we cannot live as your disciples in the world.
May we never forget you,
never walk away from you,
but always trust in you and remain close by you,
and may we be united with you for ever. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy
Spirit as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be for
ever. Amen.

Looking Forward



Longer days and warmer weather mean that plants are springing up. Those plants in the garden which you thought were dead suddenly erupt in a flurry of green. Sadly, not everything survives as I discovered after the severe frosts in February. I had over wintered about 60 pelargonium cuttings in the greenhouse which were doing well. The temperatures were so low that they were all decimated except one. What a joy to watch that one thriving. Alongside that single specimen there are lots of seedlings and plants grown from cuttings being tended and nurtured, getting ready for a new home.

Looking at the roadmap out of lockdown we are hopeful that we will be able to meet again as a community later this year, but with no clear plan we are again offering plants for sale on the roadside outside our house. These are sold in aid of the church and this we feel demonstrates, to the many passing walkers and cyclists, that the church here at Stewton is very much alive and waiting for the time when we can come together again. Books and preserves (mainly marmalades) are still available in the porch and people clearly enjoy popping in for them when out for daily exercise. We have recently received a contribution of DVDs to add to the books.

In the meantime Stay Safe, Stay Positive and look forward to a brighter future.

Dorothy

Something more... for LENT



As Lent runs its course and the events of Holy Week and Easter come over the horizon you may just need to review any commitment you made for Lent. If you are in any doubt just refer back to issues 52 and 53 of this Post. Don't forget the Deanery Lent Group 'SOUL SONGS' at 7 – 8 pm on Wednesday evenings on ZOOM. Access details for this group are on the Louth Team Parish website.



Well the weather dominated things again this week. Unfortunately the weather man got it wrong again, so has been colder and wetter than we had anticipated. Have been fixing the new tines again this week, hopefully ready to get on the land again to prepare for drilling this next week. Crops have started to improve as you can see from the pictures, the wheat is filling out, and the rape has done a bolt, so good news for the fertilizer. I have spent this week in the office, researching and form filling to comply with whatever the government want us to grow on the farm, things are not as simple as they used to be. Fingers crossed for some sunshine soon.



(Could not resist attaching this picture of deer taken from our wildlife camera – quality not good, but they are so lovely- he has some lovely antlers).

Jane x



CHURCH COMMUNITY CALENDAR (for the month ahead)

March 2021

March 28th Palm Sunday

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Philippians 2:5-11

Mark 11:1-11

and/or Mark 14 to the end of 15

April 2021

April 4th Easter Day

Acts 10:34-43

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

John 20:1-18

April 11th 2nd Sunday of Easter

Acts 4:32-35

1 John 1:1-2:2

John 20:19-end

April 18th 3rd Sunday of Easter

Acts 3:12-19

1 John 3:1-7

Luke 24:36b-48

(The following is an edited version of a letter from our bishops urging us to participate this coming week)

The National Day of Reflection

Tuesday 23 March

Next Tuesday (March 23rd) is the first anniversary of the national lockdown focusing on our collective loss as a nation and on hope.

We are invited to 'take a minute to reflect' and a 'moment to connect'.

Organised by the Marie Curie charity, and supported by the Church of England, the Day of Reflection provides a first national opportunity to face our loss together. It may also be an occasion on which we might connect with those who have been bereaved and spend some time looking forward in hope. There will be a minute's silence at **midday**, after which the Central Council of Bellringers is encouraging church bells to be rung where possible.

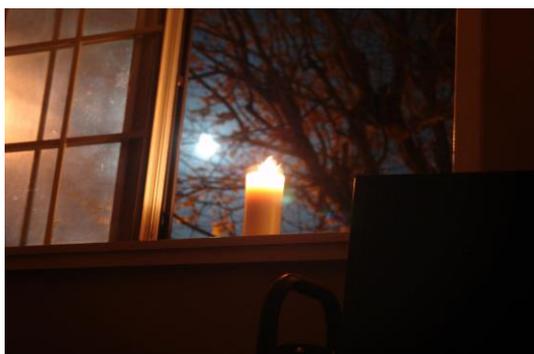
We know all too clearly, opportunities for mourning and grief have been severely restricted as church buildings have been closed and numbers limited at funerals. Research released today by the Church of England reveals that more than half (51%) of young adults, aged between 18 and 29 years old, have been directly affected by bereavement as a result of the pandemic. This figure should be set alongside the 31% of people aged 60 and over who have been affected. In other words, the pandemic has brought (what may be a first experience of) death close to a group of people who are in many ways unprepared to encounter it. An online survey showed that 3/4 of those surveyed were unable to attend a funeral in the past year due to the pandemic and more than 80% were not able to say 'goodbye properly'.

It is our deeply felt vocation as a church to minister to and care for those who have been bereaved and those who are facing death.

Lincoln Cathedral is providing online material and worship throughout the day and observing the minute's silence, after which the tower bell will toll. There will be an online service of Choral Evensong that can be shared by you and others. There are also online resources and various suggestions of ways to participate on the Church of England website. These include templates for intercessions and for prayer postcards.

At 8pm on Tuesday 23rd many people are intending to put lights in their windows.

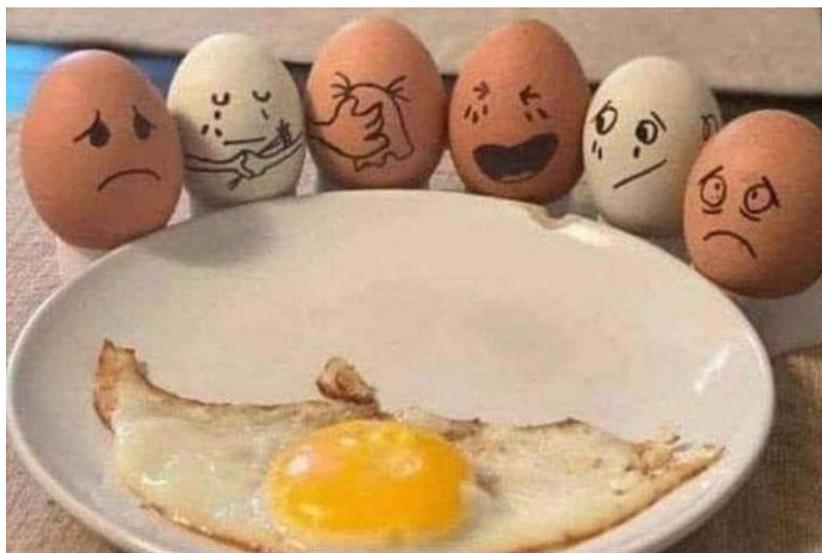
Here is something we can all do as a community.



This has a familiar feel about it here in Lincolnshire:

Just failed my driving test. When the examiner asked me "what sign would you expect to see down a narrow country road?" Apparently 'fresh eggs for sale' wasn't the answer...

As we approach Holy Week and Easter you might want to reflect on this!



He died last fry day. Thank God he wasn't beaten. Don't worry, he went over easy. He's now on the sunny side. He's definitely in a better plate.