

Wye Brooks Group
Update for 15th August
Trinity 11—GREEN

LECTIONARY

1 King 2:10-12; 3:3-14
Psalm 111
Ephesians 5:15-20
John 6:51-58

**OR THE FESTIVAL OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Isaiah 61:10-end
Psalm 45:10-end
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 1:46-55

FROM THE VICAR



We could, if we wished, celebrate the festival of the Blessed Virgin Mary today. What do we know about her? Surprisingly, very little.

We do know that she was betrothed to Joseph. Now of course we live in very odd times in which we rightly take a stand against the abuse of children. Many want to say that Mary was in her late teens or early twenties, but the reality was probably far less palatable. There was no such thing as an age of consent. She'd have been available to marry as soon as she hit puberty and that means that she was most likely engaged at about thirteen or fourteen and would have been married a year after that.

We know less about Joseph. He does disappear from the Biblical accounts, and so the speculation is that he was, perhaps, a family friend or cousin quite a bit older than Mary. The betrothal would probably have been a business arrangement between families. It was a much stronger arrangement than engagement is to us, and it needed a divorce to break it.

The gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus are different. Luke tells of the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary to tell her that she was going to become pregnant and give birth. Matthew says that the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream to give him what would have been very unwelcome news of her pregnancy, and that he should not divorce Mary.

Matthew tells us that Joseph took her as his wife, but had no union with her until she had given birth to Jesus. The Roman Catholic Church is anxious to preserve the 'purity' of Mary and therefore to claim that she remained a virgin for the rest of her life, some even claiming that the physical virginity of Mary was miraculously restored. It can only do this by treating the references to Jesus' brothers as

meaning cousins or other close relatives.

Luke tells us that the pregnant Mary visited her relative Elizabeth, who would soon afterwards become the mother of John the Baptist. He also tells us that at nine months pregnant Mary travelled with Joseph to Bethlehem. But why? Joseph would need to register in the census, but Mary would certainly not have needed to (no woman would need to), and this was a very long journey for her. It's all speculation of course, but perhaps she was afraid of the women with which she mixed. She was, after all, pregnant outside marriage.

Not a great deal more is known about her. Mary and Joseph 'lost' Jesus in Jerusalem when he was twelve. When they questioned his actions they received short shrift: "Didn't you know I would be about my Father's business. She enlisted his help at the wedding at Cana in Galilee and received a mild rebuke, and in Mark 3 we are told that the family came to take Jesus home because of his ministry, but are blocked by him. Other than that the only time we encounter Mary in the gospels is at the crucifixion, and I think that really what the gospels tell us is that she didn't really understand her son or his mission too well.

The Roman Catholic Church has a very weighty doctrine of Mary, based on her agreement to give birth to Jesus. She is called *Theotokos* (God bearer). Some parts of the Roman Catholic Church give her the title *Co-Redemptrix* (implying that she is equal with Christ as Redeemer). She also *Ever Virgin*.

Another of her titles is *Queen of Heaven*. Our Roman Catholic friends claim that in order to give birth to the Son of God Mary must have been sinless, and therefore that she herself must have been conceived without sin (*the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception*).

What we have with Mary is a mixture of a very few historical details and a massive amount of inference. I think that we can go as far as we need to by simply recognising that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and leaving it at that. What we undoubtedly can say though, is that God can do an awful lot with a very little. If the world can be brought salvation through the simple agreement of a young girl, then it must be true that other works of God can be accomplished through ours.



HOW TO GROW YOUR CHURCH

Here of course we are having a series of snippets from Neil Hudson's Book *Imagine Church* to get us to think about how we might grow our churches.

Last week we thought about questions which new people turning up to church might be asking. This week it's about questions we need to be asking ourselves.

- Why do we meet on a Sunday morning, and why always at the same time?
- Why do we take up a collection?
- What is Holy Communion, why do we do it and why does it involve taking a small piece of bread and a sip of wine?
- Why do we sing so much (when community singing has all but gone from the life of the nation)?
- Why does one person get to speak to give a talk?
- Why do we speak so little about everyday life in church?
- Why do the hymns we sing seem so disconnected from our times?

These are about understanding our church culture because people may not simply be able to set into it.

But here are a few more, which I am adding.

- *Is our welcome of new people up to scratch?*
- *Why does there appear to be such a massive difference between the lavishness of the liturgy and the hymns and the dull experience of the people?*
- *On balance, do you think that people turning up to church for the first time (perhaps with children) will be inclined to come back for a second time. What will they find which switches them on.*

THE BENEFICE THIS WEEK

SUNDAY AT WELSH NEWTON

8.30 am for Christian Meditation Group followed at 9.00 am by Faith and Fellowship (home group).
All welcome

SUNDAY AT MARSTOW

Benefice service at 10am
(with optional Holy Communion)

Covid has not gone away and we do still need to be careful. This will be *liturgy light* Service of the Word with a finite end, followed by a short act of Holy Communion for anyone who wishes to attend.

We will be administering both bread and wine. The wine will be consecrated in a chalice, but decanted into taster cups.

HOUSE GROUP

Led by Ben

Tuesday 10am

Zoom invitation issued with this Update's accompanying email.

PRAYER GROUP

Led by Ben

Tuesday , 7.30pm

Zoom invitation issued with this Update's accompanying email.

2ND HOUSE GROUP

Led by Sue

Sunday 8th at 8.30am

St Mary's, Welsh Newton

SUNDAY 22ND AT LLANGROVE

Benefice *lay led* service at 10am

COMING UP

| | | |
|--------|------------|---------------------|
| 15 Aug | Marstow | 10.00 (optional HC) |
| 22 Aug | Llangrove | 10.00 (lay led) |
| 29 Aug | Llangarron | 10.00 |

Note—29 August is an interruption in the rota. We are having a baptism at Llangarron.

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------|
| 5 Sept | Goodrich (Revd Penny Powdrill) |
| 12 Sept | Marstow (Revd Jill Stephens) |

BUT WATCH FOR CHANGES!



If Covid still makes you worried about coming to church, then why not look online or on tv? Here are some suggestions.

Local

Our own 'Light Bite'. The second in a series on awkward questions you might be asked as a Christian. Today's is the first of two dealing with the question: "Doesn't evolution do away with the need for God. Go to <https://youtu.be/dtJys61YdIY>

Our Diocese

There isn't now a message from the Bishop till September, but there is still access to online worship in the diocese.

Around the Country—Lively.

10.30 or 6.30 St Nick's Bristol on <https://www.stnicholasbristol.org/online>

My favourite: 9.30, 11.30 and 5.30 All Souls Langham Place on <https://allsouls.org/Groups/337797/Watch/Watch.aspx>
St Andrew the Great in Cambridge (stag.org)
Holy Trinity Combe Down (htcd.church)

Traditional

A choice of over 80 traditional services <https://www.pbs.org.uk/churches-and-services/-1>

The National Church of England - at 9am.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

Songs of Praise is about Faith and Marriage It's on BBC2 at 1.15pm



If you see online worship that you like, TELL US.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- a) **We don't have to wear masks**
- b) **We can sing hymns**
- c) **We can share the Peace**
- d) **We can take communion**

But the the virus has not gone away and we need to continue to take care. I suggest that masks are worn, especially to sing, but I won't be enforcing it.

For the time being I am NOT going to invite the sharing of the Peace beyond a nod or a thumbs up.

At Holy Communion wine will be consecrated in one vessel, but then decanted into taster cups. This will be trialled at Marstow on the 15th August.

No-one should feel compelled to take communion.

PROVISIONAL ROTA

There is a LOT of discussion going on about how to get back to a sustainable normality. From September we are more than doubling the number of services so that there is one communion service in the benefice per week, one other service and one midweek service.

This is considerably more challenging than you might expect and I'm grateful to the Wardens' and Reps Group for their input.

At the moment the rota looks like this:

1st Sunday

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 10.00 Llangrove | All Age Praise service (lay led) |
| 11.00 Llangarron | Benefice Communion |

2nd Sunday

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 8.30 Welsh Newton | Benefice Communion |
| 10.00 Marstow | |
| 11.00 Goodrich | |

3rd Sunday

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| 10.00 Llangrove | Benefice Communion |
| 11.00 Llangarron | Iona + Holy Communion |

4th Sunday

| | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 10.00 Marstow | Iona service |
| 11.00 Goodrich | Benefice Communion |
| 6pm Welsh Newton | Village Service |

The precise format of the services will be decided locally BUT remember that *if* your church was declining before the lockdown, it's not doing to start expanding after it on the same diet!

THESE MAY CHANGE

Every Tuesday

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 10.00 Marstow | Informal Holy Communion, then coffee and chat. |
|---------------|--|

LIGHT BITES

For anyone who hasn't tumbled to it yet, a *Light Bite* is a home produced 'event' of about 20 minutes on *You Tube*. It will consist usually of an introduction, a bible reading, a talk a hymn and a blessing. They are supposed to TEACH you something about your faith or challenge you.



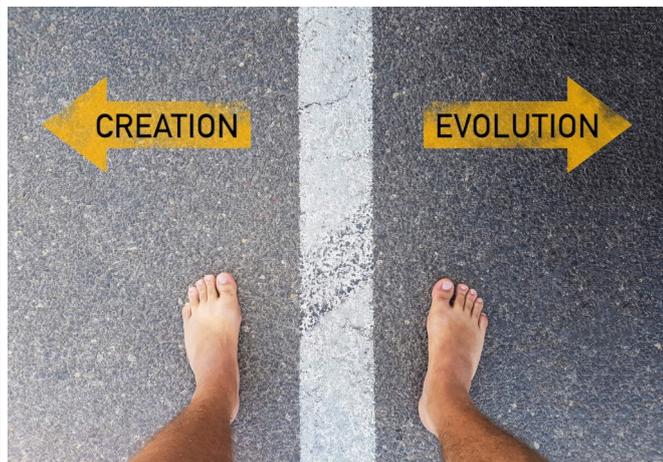
THEMES FOR AUGUST

Our Christian learning is never complete and there are always some awkward questions we don't like to be asked. This month we'll be dealing with some of those. By all means given me an awkward topic to deal with.

| | |
|--------|-----------------------|
| 15 Aug | Awkward Questions (3) |
| 22 Aug | Awkward Questions (4) |
| 29 Aug | Awkward Questions (5) |
| 5 Sep | No Light Bite |
| 12 Sep | No Light Bite |

THIS WEEK'S LIGHT BITE

Suppose someone asks you why you believe in Creation when Evolution is a fact. How will you answer? Evolution itself (or at least evolution within species) does seem to be a fact. But today's is about the conditions coming together for evolution to happen in the first place.



(ALTERNATIVE) COLLECT TRINITY 11

God of glory,
the end of our searching,
help us to lay aside
all that prevents us from seeking your kingdom,
and to give all that we have
to gain the pearl beyond all price,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

A BOOK OF THE BIBLE

HABAKKUK

Habakkuk is unusual as a prophetic book. Whereas the prophetic books usually address the people with the words of God, Habakkuk doesn't. It's actually a dialogue between the prophet and God.

The first two chapters are organized around Habakkuk's questions and the Lord's replies. Habakkuk saw Judah's rapid moral and spiritual decline, and this deeply troubled him. Yet God's response puzzled him even more. How could a good and just God use a more wicked nation (Babylon) to punish a less wicked one (Judah)? God makes it clear that both nations are to be judged and appropriately punished for their sin.

Many of the righteous in Judah would have agreed with Habakkuk's words. They wondered what God was doing and struggled with the same issues as Habakkuk. God's words reassured them that he was in control and would deal appropriately with the nations.

Although Habakkuk may not fully understand, he has learned to rely totally on God's wisdom and justice. He knows God can resolve issues in ways he could never have imagined. This God is certainly worthy of Habakkuk's praise and worship, which is how the book ends.

IN THE NEWS - 'A' LEVEL RS

It seems that the numbers of students taking Religious Studies at 'A' level have risen by about 6% and so there is pressure on the government to make sure that RS is properly funded. This is very good news, especially as numbers taking the exam have fallen in recent years.

But don't get too excited! For us oldies RE as it was when we were children, was being taught about the Bible and Christianity. RS (Religious Studies) as it is now, is anything but that. It's about equipping students to examine critically the religious world and its thinking. You can be a determined atheist and perform well in the subject. No faith is assumed or encouraged.

The rise in numbers is very largely to do with the Philosophy, Ethics and Theology options. All of these are very demanding, very critical and may challenge someone with a solid faith. The types of topics students may encounter are things like the existence of God, the problem of evil, the nature, use and meaning of religious language, religious experience, the nature of justice, war and justice, the value of human life, sex ethics, conscience, business ethics, and so on.

Rejoice that students are doing such serious stuff, but don't expect it to get them into church.

DIOCESEAN SHARED PRIORITIES

Here is what we the Church are aiming for in this part of God's kingdom.

1. **Spiritual and numerical growth**
2. **Engaging in transforming communities**
3. **Reimagining ministry**

Have a bit of a think about what these might mean. Our churches do not exist for their own sake.

MINI BIBLE STUDY QUALITIES OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

When a church is doing what it should, here's what will be going on.

1. It will be **committed to sound doctrine**. A biblical church will faithfully teach God's Word and stand on its principles, even if the culture does not. (Col. 2:4-8; I Tim. 4:6; Jude 3-4)
2. It will be **characterized by love**. We have experienced the love of Christ, and that same love should flow through each member of the church. Our love for one another should be without limits. (James 2:8; John 13:35; 15:17)
3. It will be **characterized by unity**. In order for the church to function correctly, its members must work in unity. Paul warned against divisions among church members (Rom. 16:17-18). Unity comes from putting the cares of others before our own. (I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2; Eph. 4:3)
4. It will be **characterized by purity**. The church must be pure in doctrine and godly behaviour. (Matt. 18:17; I Cor. 5:6-8, 13; II Cor. 2:6; I Thess. 3:6, 14)
5. It will be **prepared to suffer persecution**. In a fallen world, the rejection of God's truth and God's people is nothing new. As followers of Christ, we are told to expect persecution, just as our Saviour Himself was persecuted. (Matt. 5:11-12; I Pet. 4:12-19; II Tim. 3:12-13)
6. It will be **waiting for Christ's return**. The Church has a glorious future to look forward to. (Rev. 19:7; 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 22:5); I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:15-17; Titus 2:13).

A church with these qualities will be a healthy church that has the peace and joy that comes from following Christ. The transformation of the Church is a job in which all of us are involved.

ON THE COMPUTER



Gone are the days when to publicise the Church or its activities you could just stick a notice on the notice board.

These days, to be seen, all organisations know they need a presence online and/or on social media, and this has been a work in progress for our churches for more than three years. These days our Church Notice Board is mainly online. That's where we get seen most

We have been developing our online presence, and we'll continue to do that as we attempt to respond to the rapidly changing society of which we are a part.

Benefice Websites

Wye Brooks Benefice <https://wyebrooksbenefice.wixsite.com/my-site>

There are links to all the individual church websites, as below.

For individual Churches go to:

St Giles Church, Goodrich

<https://www.goodrichchurchherefordshire.org.uk/>

St Matthew's Church, Marstow

<https://www.marstowchurch.org/>

St Deinst's Church, Llangarron

<https://www.llangarron.info/church>

Christ Church, Llangrove

llangrove.org.uk (village website)

St Mary's the Virgin Church, Welsh Newton

<https://www.ourcountrychurch.co.uk/>

You can also visit **A Church Near You** for information about each church and an indication of what is happening in it.

WEDDING NEWS

We have just had our second 'normal' wedding - that of

Maxwell Nana Kwasi

Adutwum Takyi (try saying that

when you're drunk!) and Eleanor Rose

Black. Eleanor is Sylvia Matthews' daughter.

The service was at St Deinst's Church Llangarron.

The groom's family is Ghanaian so there was a coming together of very different people, all made in God's image.

It was an occasion of deep joy and regular laughter. Our congratulations to the happy couple.



PRAYER FOR OTHERS

The UK

- HM the Queen and the Royal Family,
- HM Government

Coronavirus.

- Infection rates and the easing of restrictions
- Rising rates elsewhere in the world. And travel issues.
- Those who continue to suffer from the Virus and from long Covid
- Those who have lost loved ones or watched them suffer.
- Those who continue to be isolated

World

- The perceived threats from both Russia and China
- Taliban violence in Afghanistan.
- Famine in Ethiopia
- The migrant issue
- The UK/Europe tension over trade, travel and vaccines.
- Violent persecution of Christians in the Muslim world
- Climate change and ecology

Our churches and clergy

- Clergy—for energy, wisdom, faithfulness, courage.
- Churches—role in the community, finances, adaptability, digital presence.
- The future. What kind of normal (this is really important)
- The weekly services, Light Bites, the Updates, the lay-led services, the Zoom Prayer Meeting, House Groups, Meditation Group, the Worship Group, the Tech working party and the work to give us a proper digital presence; the possibility of starting a benefice choir.
- The Church as it debates *Living in Love and Faith*, which is about our approach to issues in human sexuality.

Our villages

- Our pubs
- Our parish councils, local businesses and schools

Pray for people

- Brenda, on a course of chemo, and Graham
- Doris, living with dementia, in a nursing home
- Rosie, with various problems, putting on a brave face
- Anita, between two surgeries
- Margaret, still recovering after operations
- Ron, now back home, and Diana, his wife.
- James, a young man with long term illness
- Carol, in a persistent vegetative state.
- Ivor, battling on
- Lisa, still suffering from vertigo
- Jim, recovering after surgery
- Alan, a homeless man who for several months lived in the church porch in Welsh Newton and is now living in Usk, struggling to recover after prostate surgery.
- Nana and Eleanor Takyi who were married at Llangarron this weekend
- The family of Sue Maud of St Deinst's Church Llangarron, whose funeral was two weeks ago
- The families, friends and neighbours of all in Plymouth affected by the murders, and the emergency services.



JUST A THOUGHT WHY NOT...

leave a gift to your church in your will?

It's easy enough to do and will help to ensure your church's future.

COMPANION WORK NEEDED

One of our parishioners would like to find paid work as a companion to someone—cooking, housekeeping, shopping etc.

If you or someone you know might be able to offer this kind of work, please ring me (01989 770454)

To anyone from the parish of Welsh Newton - please complete the survey.

To anyone at all - please support St Mary's Welsh Newton by entering the draw

ST MARY THE VIRGIN



WELSH NEWTON

PARISH SURVEY

To complete
our online
survey



Website: [St Mary The Virgin | Welsh Newton | Temblar Church](#)

NEWS FROM THE PERSECUTED CHURCH NIGERIA

Nigeria has just over 200 million people, of which about 53% are muslim and 46% are Christian. The so called 'Middle Belt' is substantially Christian. Suspected Fulani militants are, it appears, trying to drive out the Christians there from their lands, through a campaign of killing, looting and burning, the destruction of crops then taking over the land when the owners flee.



So far the Government appears to have done very little to try to bring this to a halt or indeed to try to look after those driven from their homes and lands.

The Church says that persecution of Christians is escalating, and that in places the violence would better be described as genocide.

Friends of St Mary's

Welsh Newton



Draw

Monthly Prizes

1st : £50

2nd : £20

3rd : £10



£1 per week per number

[Friends of St Mary's Draw | Mysite \(ourcountrychurch.co.uk\)](#)

Email: stmarysdraw@gmail.com

FOR YOUR DIARY

**ROYAL
BRITISH
LEGION**

**Centenary Celebration
Sunday 12th September at 3:30pm.**

Herefordshire County Royal British Legion and the Battle of Britain Committee are celebrating the Centenary of the formation of the Royal British Legion at Hereford Cathedral during the evensong service on Sunday 12th September at 3:30pm.

Everyone is welcome to attend this very special commemoration service.

The service commemorates those who have given their lives in service, those who continue to serve and those who have supported our armed services during the last 100 years.

The British Legion was formed in May 1921 to help returning WW1 soldiers and their families.

Today through the Poppy Appeal and many donations, members and volunteers strive to raise money in support of all veterans including those from the Merchant naval service, present day serving armed forces personnel and their families.

**Barbara Leeson
Herefordshire County Chairman.**

REGULARS

THESE ITEMS DON'T CHANGE FROM WEEK TO WEEK

THE DAILY HOPE LINE

0800 804 8044

If you haven't done already, this is information to be passed on to those who don't have access to the Internet. It's a freephone number to a Church of England initiative, where there are recorded hymns, messages and prayers.

PARISH GIVING SCHEME

We are pushing the Parish Giving Scheme because it is the best way of giving to your Church, not just because of *how little hassle* it is to you, but also because of *how safe* and *tax efficient* it is, *how easy it is for treasurers to administer* and how it usually does actually *drive the income of churches up*. And GOOD NEWS—you don't even have to fill in a form. You can set it up by phone. By all means ring your church treasurer for details and fill in a form, or call the number below.

PARISH GIVING SCHEME

Tel 0333 002 1271

| Church | Parish Ref | Church | Parish Ref |
|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Goodrich | 180618231 | Marstow | 180618241 |
| Llangarron | 180618239 | Llangrove | 180618240 |
| Welsh Newton | 180618256 | | |

THE BORDER NEWS

Not currently available as a hard copy.

To get the online Border News:

- Go to wyereaches.org
- Click the What's On tab.

CONTACT

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Revd Philip 'Ben' Bentham

Tel 01989 770454

Email benbentham@yahoo.co.uk

If you have suggestions for improving this Update, please do let me know.

To unsubscribe, simply drop me a line.



ALL AGE CHURCH

Sue Evans' All Age material is attached to the email accompanying this Update.



The Llangrove Milk Shed at the Village Hall, For farm fresh milk and a few other things like butter, cheese and cake.



Our local eateries are important, and without our patronage they risk not being able to survive, especially in this climate.

Llangrove - The Royal Arms

Phone [01989 770267](tel:01989770267)

Goodrich - The Hostellerie

Phone [01600 890241](tel:01600890241)

Goodrich - The Cross Keys

Phone [01600 890692](tel:01600890692)

Goodrich - Hen and Dot Café

Flanesford Priory, Open Fri to Sun 10am - 4pm

Phone [01600 890506](tel:01600890506)

CLERGY DAY OFF

My DAY OFF is Monday. I may be around on Mondays, but can't guarantee it.

CLERGY HOLIDAYS THIS YEAR

30 Aug - 12 Sept 28-31 Dec