

Fellowship News

The bi-monthly newsletter for the parishes of Woburn, Eversholt, Milton Bryan and Battlesden with Potsgrove
October/November 2020



Church in Covid times

Church



When the Bible speaks of Church it refers to people, the worshipping community of those who follow Jesus Christ. Despite this being often restated from the pulpit, the definition the world foists on us is that Church is a building and institution. We can all play a part in correcting this error in perception with those we meet.

So, the community of those who follow Jesus Christ in our Benefice has had to function very differently since March.

Worship

Online worship Services have flourished across the nation. Our online Services have been produced here in Woburn and circulated throughout the benefice and beyond. Early in lockdown the viewing figures were in the hundreds. Now with Corvid secure Services happening in Church the numbers are less. At the time of writing the last two services have had sixty and forty five views respectively. The Sermon alone on those dates had thirty and nineteen views respectively.

Many have contributed to these Services especially the young people of St Mary's. Many are hugely grateful for all who have participated in recording production, testimony, readings, prayers and music for sung worship.

These Services remain very important for those who cannot, or choose not, to return to Services in Church whilst the restrictions are in place.

Fellowship

Informal networks have flourished by means of phone calls and online. Socially distanced visits gradually became possible as well. WhatsApp groups have played an important role in each of our villages and churches. In Woburn ninety people were organised into eight pastoral groups. Some have become less active as lockdown has eased. Others have become permanent thriving fellowship groups with regular social or Bible study meetings on Zoom.

Finance

In March the Church programme was halted in an instant and the buildings closed. Collections and fund-raising ceased. Each of the PCC's have had to carefully consider how to cope with this. This has been the biggest challenge to the churches whose income depends more heavily on fund raising or plate collection. Giving by Standing Order is established as the main source of income at St Mary's and this has minimised the financial impact of lock down there.

This current situation provides a great opportunity to encourage our congregations across the benefice to make their offering in this way. It is a mark of a healthy Church to be financed increasingly by the offerings that come from its members. Church finance should never exist in a PCC compartment apart from worship and spiritual life. Financial offerings are an essential and integral part of worship and discipleship.



The coming months

The reality is that our communal life will be restricted until there is a vaccination programme for Coronavirus. The big Services for Remembrance Sunday and Christmas will almost certainly not be happening in Church buildings.

Recorded and online Services might seem a poor substitute but they do provide a unique opportunity for creativity to be grasped in these difficult circumstances.

(cont...)

Contact: Benefice Office: (Monday - Friday)
Rector: Rev Steve Nuth

07562 390513 woburnbenefice@gmail.com
01525 290225 rectornuth@gmail.com

At a key moment in their history the people of Israel had a period of wandering in the wilderness before entering the promised land. Whilst not exactly a parallel to what the Church is experiencing now. It was a time that ended when the people of Israel moved on from the past and grasped the promise of God for the future. I believe our Lord is and will redeem the difficult times we are in. There is the promise and potential of God for us ahead.

Steve Nuth



Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCM) 2020

These important meetings in the life of our parishes were scheduled for April. However because of lock down restrictions they were postponed. At APCM meetings the past year will be briefly reviewed and key issues before us in the coming months considered. The Church Accounts are presented for adoption and the Church Warden and PCC elections take place.

All Electoral roll members of the churches are invited

Steve Nuth

Battlesden APCM - took place on 28th September 2020. Please contact the Church Wardens for details.

Woburn APCM—Thursday, 1st October 2020, 7.30 pm by Zoom.

Invitation and link will be sent to members by email

Milton Bryan APCM

Tuesday, 13th October 2020, 7.30 pm.

A socially distanced meeting in St Peter's Church, Milton Bryan

Eversholt APCM

Wednesday, 14th October 2020, 2.00 pm by Zoom.

Invitation and link will be sent to members by email

Cycling for St Peter's

The financial forecast for our PCC at St Peter's Church, Milton Bryan in May, during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, made for an uncomfortable read as we considered lockdown with the loss of giving in church and cancelled fund-raising. With an anxious heart I felt compelled to do something, anything! What could I do without breaking any of the restrictions? I couldn't just sit on my hands.

I am no athlete, but I decided to commit myself to clocking up a minimum of 500 miles between 22nd May and 28th June for St Peter's, Milton Bryan to try to raise vital and much needed funds this year.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13) was a line of encouragement sent to me from super cyclist Mike Wagg from St Mary's Woburn as we kept in touch via the Strava App. I needed to receive that part way through this challenge and I was equally delighted to receive all the messages of support and encouragement which kept me going, thank you!



Another surprise, on the eve of passing my 500th mile was Mike Wagg offering to cycle with me through that milestone and take a few photographs. A great evening ride, two

Christian men on wheels talking Faith, family, life and bikes!

My final score was 600.76 miles during the five week period, pedalling my way through all weathers. I cycled through the beautiful Bedfordshire countryside in glorious sunshine with nothing but the birdsong and the Spirit of the Lord with me. I have been soaked through thunder storms, cycled on cold, wet evenings, head on into hail and rain, been blow dried by the mild winds, fought my way through the Potsgrove gales and found myself in awe of God's creation when cycling through the Woburn Deer Park.

The response to my appeal for sponsorship has been so much more than expected and I am extremely grateful to everyone who has sponsored me. The total raised is a wonderful £2,185.41 with an additional £282.50 tax to be reclaimed with thanks to those who have been able to Gift Aid their donation.

With huge and grateful thanks,
Kelvin White. Churchwarden. St. Peter's, Milton Bryan

"Jesus said: Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. For the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these".

Luke 18:16.

The young people of St Mary's Church, Woburn, have been nothing less than inspirational during lockdown, and continue to be so. Matt and I were asked by Steve to lead the pastoral care group for the younger members of our church when the pandemic hit.

It was our pleasure to set up a WhatsApp group which incorporated members of Sunday School and Next Generation. More recently we have been pleased to also include members of Explorers and Followers (all with parental/guardian consent).

The WhatsApp group has enabled us to be in regular contact with one another. Matt and I have used it to send short teaching sessions, Biblical scriptures, prayers, worship videos, words of encouragement and fun worksheets. Some of these were shared with us by St Michael's Church, Woburn Sands. We have also shared news, encouraged one another and delivered thanks and appreciation to all those involved in the on line services.

The young people have tirelessly served God throughout lockdown, by using their talents in reading Bible scriptures and prayers. Some have also given testimonies and one delivered an amazing talk! Those who haven't been involved have sent words of encouragement to their peers.

Their help has been required very regularly but they have never hesitated to be involved. Despite the demands of 'home school'/uni and coping with the impact of Covid-19 on their own lives, they have read, prayed and shared from their hearts and we are so proud of them.

Here are some of their thoughts on lockdown, the WhatsApp group and the on line services:

"The WhatsApp group kept us in touch, and gave us a link to our faith in God when other things were so different".

"It was good to know how each other were, as we are so used to seeing one another more regularly".

"Being involved with the on line services has been a great way to serve God, despite not being in church, and it has helped my confidence".

"I look forward to being involved in the on line services. It is nice to be part of something which helps our church family".

"Lockdown for me made me realise that you can't take day to day things for granted, such as going into shops and playing at parks, Keeping in touch using the WhatsApp group has helped me to socialise and keep in touch with my friends from church. The online services have made me feel involved and a part of one big church family".

"I have enjoyed lockdown a bit more than I thought I would. I had time to do lots of revision in preparation for upper sixth. I think the group chat has been really nice just hearing what people have done with their spare time. I like the services online as it meant there was no excuse for missing Church".



The young people continue to be involved in the on line services. Join us in praying for them as they return to school/college/uni. We look forward to being able to meet together once again.

Thank you each and every one.
You are special.

Lessons from the Past

On June 18th last year the bronze cast statue of St Michael, that had stood on the marble War Memorial column in Eversholt church yard since the 1920s, was stolen. Eversholt, and St John's Church, had lost an iconic symbol that had been a presence for 100 years, and many felt a deep emotional loss. This was coupled with a sense of outrage that the sacrifices of Eversholt residents in two World Wars had been belittled by an act of material greed and selfish opportunism.



Eversholt Remembrance Service 1927

In the 2 years prior to the theft some village residents and I had been mapping the Eversholt Church cemetery to allow easy identification and localisation of all the burials, memorials, and gravestones in the

churchyard (the maps and name lists are in the porch of the church, and are available to view online at <https://village.eversholt.org.uk/>). As a natural continuation of this project, but also as a response to the loss of the statue, I felt that the stories of the individuals named on the Memorial needed to be acknowledged and given contemporary recognition. I set about researching the lives of those who had died in the Wars, using census and parish records, contemporary press reports and military records.

I learnt a great deal about the life of the village of Eversholt before the First World War, and the impact of the war on the village. I discovered many moving and poignant stories. For instance, that of Herbert Oakley, the son of Richard Oakley who was gardener at Woburn Abbey. Herbert married in 1910, and moved with his wife to Tring. But within 2 years his wife had died and he emigrated to Australia where he worked as a hospital orderly in Brisbane. In June 1915 he enlisted, together with 330,000 other Australians (a third of whom would be killed in the war), and travelled back to Europe. While serving in northern France as a stretcher bearer he was seriously injured. He returned to England, and then to his family home, where he died the following year from his wounds. He is buried in Eversholt churchyard, and his grave is one of the four Commonwealth War Graves Commission graves in the churchyard.

Also the Burges family: the father Samuel was the stud superintendent at Woburn Abbey. He and his wife had 2 sons and 2 daughters. Both sons were killed at Ypres, within 2 weeks of each other, in 1917. The 2 daughters both had sons, and both were killed in the second World War, one at Dunkirk, the other serving in the RAF. The Burges sons and grandsons are commemorated in the churchyard, and on the War Memorial.

The full stories of all the names on the War Memorial are in an illustrated booklet that is available from St. John's Church. Eversholt lost 19 of its residents during the First World War, more than one third of the 55 or so who had enlisted.

The First World War, and to a lesser extent the Second, brought about massive social and economic disruption. The protective bubble of a stable and unchanging 'normality' was shattered, and the lives of many were transformed by external forces. While some remained relatively unaffected by these forces, many were tested and suffered greatly. The best facets of humanity and culture were accompanied by the very worst.

In 2020 we too have been going through a transformative period in history when Covid has brought devastating effects on some of our society. It has brought about death and debility, together with financial and social disruption. Although, in my eyes, none of the consequences match the extent and depths of the effects that our forebears endured in the two World Wars.

The First World War brought a move towards a new egalitarianism in society, and the start of the emancipation of women. The Second resulted in a move towards comprehensive social and health support. The Covid crisis has already allowed communities to demonstrate great social solidarity and mutual support. We can only hope that there will also be lasting positive effects too.

Understanding our past can give us insights into our present. And, especially now, it is well to remember and appreciate the traumatic times previous generations endured.

James Nott

Websites

With situations changing all the time make sure you visit church websites for the latest information.

Visit the new St Mary's, Woburn website:
<https://www.woburnparishchurch.co.uk/>

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WELCOME TO ST MARY'S CHURCH

St Mary's is a Church of England Church in the Diocese of St Albans. By joining the membership you can find out about our vision, faith and identity, worship, mission and the Church's mission and leadership.

St Peter's, Milton Bryan website:
<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/7658/>

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