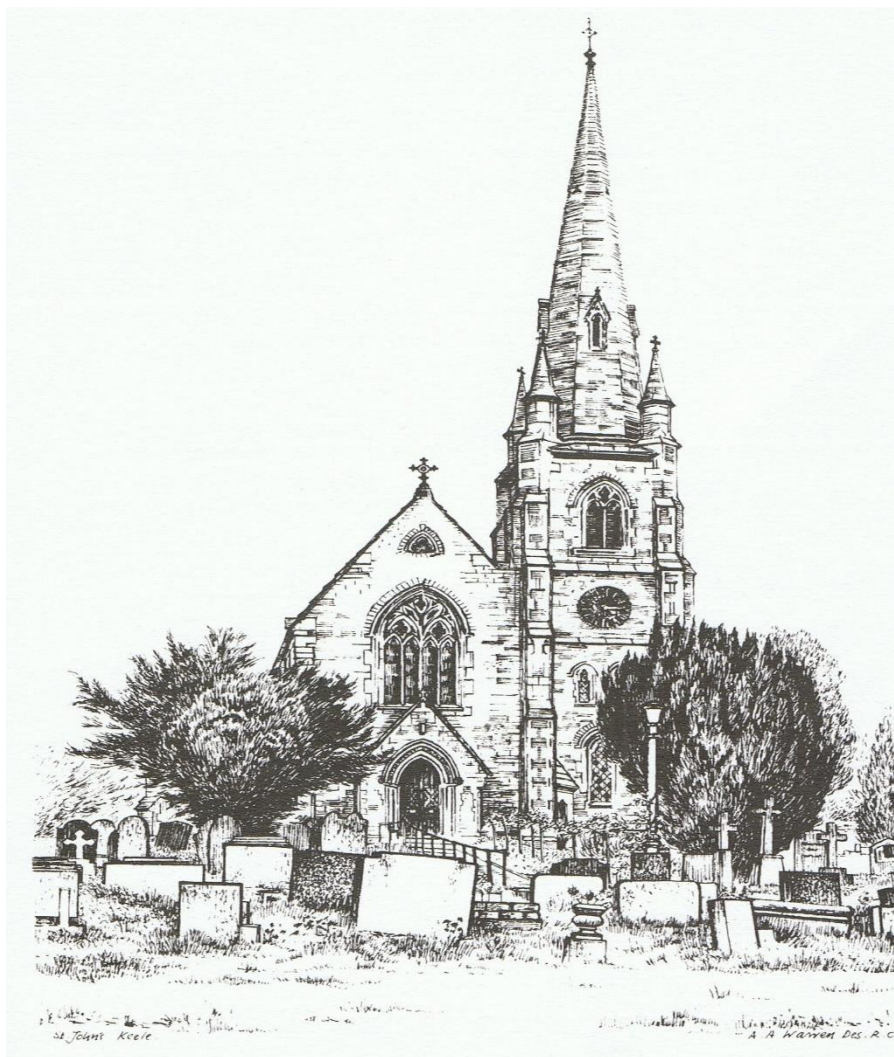


PARISH MAGAZINE



St. John the Baptist Church Keele

March 2020

50p

Worship at St John's March - April

March

Sunday 1 st	First Sunday of Lent	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 8 th	Second Sunday of Lent	8.00am Said Eucharist 11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 15 th	Third Sunday of Lent	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 22 nd	Mothering Sunday	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 29 th	Fifth Sunday of Lent	11.15am Sung Eucharist

April

Sunday 5 th	Palm Sunday	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Friday 10 th	Good Friday – Stations of the Cross	2.00pm
Sunday 12 th	Easter Day	8.00am Said Eucharist 11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 19 th	Second Sunday of Easter	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 26 th	Third Sunday of Easter	11.15am Sung Eucharist

**The Eucharist is celebrated at St Luke's Church, Silverdale
Sundays at 9.45am**

From the Vicar's Desk

As I write this contribution to our magazine, I've got to about the end of most of what needs to be done for the School celebration of Ash Wednesday. It's been our habit, these past three years or so, to have Years 5 and 6 celebrate Morning Prayer and to receive the customary 'ashing' on this, the first day of Lent. Why only these final years of Key Stage 2? Why not younger pupils? These are good questions (and I'll turn to the better one – why bother children with all this at all? – presently) to which I must answer truthfully that I just can't think of a way to 'calibrate' something that would be satisfactory across the very different age-ranges in the Primary Phase ... that's all! Put it down to a lack of ability on my part.

Now to turn to the better question – the one that asks why we need to burden youngsters (only) in the final two years of their primary education with the issues to which Ash Wednesday invites us to be alert. (I'm sensitive that that one too; for I have a very troubling memory of a visit I made to a well-known Anglican Shrine of the Mother of God. Just outside the Shrine Church I found a young lad – he would have been about aged 10 – crying. I asked him why he was so upset. He sobbed that his class (he was in a privately-owned Anglican School associated with the Shrine) was required to 'go to confession'; but he just couldn't think of anything to confess. I consoled him as best I could and told him that I'd have a word with the Chaplain. This I did. He was not sympathetic – and I'm afraid I have a rather shorter tolerance than I ought with knuckle-draggers, not least of the pious kind.

I shared with you that little vignette to show that I really do appreciate how these things can be a destructive burden to us. And so on. But – back to our ‘better question’ – it does seem to me that, if we are to grow as persons, and given that (despite the ‘best’ efforts of successive Governments of both blue- and red-tie wearers) are Schools still are not *just* about giving people skills for jobs but shaping *persons* for life ... it seems to me that an important part of that growing will be to understand the realities of the darker aspects of our lives. And thus, to Ash Wednesday.

Since before the Reformation, the Christian community has smirched the foreheads of its people with ash on (and hence!) Ash Wednesday. This ‘ashing’ is accompanied, for each imposition, with the sonorous words *Remember that you are dust, and to the dust you shall return*. I guess that’s a good point to address some concerns.

The act of smearing ash on a person’s head is undeniably dramatic; but what does the drama indicate? One way of looking at it is to say something along the following lines: that, according to Christian doctrine, a human being is a miserable and filthy wretch; that the ashing underlines this appalling condition by dirtying the head and by telling her that she is herself nothing but dirt and that it’s in dirt that she belongs. Assuming (and I would argue that you oughtn’t) that Calvinism is a version of Christianity, that really is how at least one ‘tradition’ within Christianity regards us ... and, by implication, our Years 5 and 6 pupils. However, this is not the only way to look at this – indeed, I would argue (not here, though, for lack of space!) that this is certainly NOT the way to look at ourselves, nor at Ash Wednesday. Let me try to show how this is.

The words *Remember that you are dust, and to the dust you shall return* are from the book in the Hebrew Bible which we by habit call ‘Genesis’. The rich language of the creation myths is being expressed here – God, creating from ‘the stuff of the earth’ the *adam* (not the name of an individual, but a description of the first earthling – and not a male either! Again, please have a word with me if you’d like fuller explanation). What Christian theology and Liturgy do with this rich language is to point out to us, in dramatic form, that we are creatures of the earth, and our sin is to deny, suppress, or otherwise seek to escape the conditions of our humanity. So sin is here being presented as our attempts at being less than human. And grace (a technical word meaning, among other things, ‘gift’) is that by which we return to and inhabit, as though for the first time, that humanity from which we think we can flee.

So, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, and all who receive the Ash on the first day of Lent, are being reminded that we are human and that we need to become what we are. That’s all – or, that’s a start.

Fr Peter Jones

Ash Wednesday



*Remember that you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.*

E C C L E S I A S T E S 3 : 2 0

The Bishop's Pastoral Letter

Do the little things

Bishop Sarah's pastoral letter for March 2020

The month of March begins with the day on which we remember St. David, patron saint of Wales. A sixth-century monk, St David was an abbot and bishop known for his compassion and kindness, particularly to those who were sick or poor. During his life, David travelled far to spread Christianity among the pagan Celtic tribes of Western Britain and was also a founder of more than a dozen monasteries.

Nearly five hundred years elapsed between David's death and the first manuscripts recording his life and, as a result, it isn't clear how much of the history of David's life is legend rather than fact. However, according to historic account, written in the 11th century, an angel foretold the birth of David to St Patrick, 30 years before it happened.

It is claimed that David lived for over 100 years, and it is generally accepted that he died in 589. His last words to his followers were in a sermon on the previous Sunday:

'Be joyful, and keep your faith and your creed. Do the little things that you have seen me do and heard about.'

His words, 'Do the little things' have proved an inspiration to many down the ages.

St. Chad, first Bishop of Lichfield, is remembered on the 2nd of March. Chad was known as a person of wisdom, gentleness and humility, who often brought peace in the midst of difficult situations. He was committed to a life of prayer and teaching and the example of his life brought many to faith as he travelled from Northumbria, the place of his birth, through what is now Yorkshire and on to Mercia, where he became bishop.

As Bishop Michael has said previously:

‘Chad’s legacy is threaded through the history and the geography of our diocese, but all its power derived from the simple-hearted commitment with which he himself followed his Lord, and the friendly openness with which he invited others to join him.’

St. Patrick, a saint particularly close to my heart as I was born on his feast day, was also a traveller, sometimes not of his own volition. He was captured by Irish raiders when he was sixteen years old and taken to Ireland as a slave, escaping after 6 years. It is thought that he travelled to continental Europe, where he trained as a priest and later returned to Ireland as a bishop.

Patrick brought people to faith in Jesus as he walked all over Ireland and although he was faced with opposition and persecution, he continued his missionary journeys. He was humble and courageous and his determination to accept suffering and success with equal patience and endurance enabled many to hear the message of the gospel.

So, as we journey through Lent, let us take from the stories of these three ancestors in the faith, a desire to be joyful and ‘do the little things’ as St. David did, that help others to encounter the life transforming gospel message through our words and actions.

Let us ‘walk in the footsteps of St. Chad’ bringing wisdom, gentleness and peace in our encounters with others as we build good relationships in our homes, churches and communities, especially at this time of political transition.

And let us have the courage and determination of St. Patrick as we look to challenge unjust structures, as we partner with others in seeking the common good and working for justice as a people of hope.

+Sarah Bullock
Bishop of Shrewsbury

From the Church Wardens

The good news is, that for whatever reason, possibly because the wind has been in the wrong direction to force water through the flashings, the roof has not leaked during these last two storms. That said it has delayed the contractor starting on the work as they have been tied up with emergency storm repairs, they probably will not be able to start until March now. We have to be thankful that, as I write, the weather has not caused us any issues, which is a blessing. Storm Ciara did however cause us to cancel the two services scheduled for the Sunday as it was not safe. I am aware of the difficulties of communicating these short notice decisions and that not everyone received the message that there was no services especially for the 11:15 service, for that I can only apologise. Now that we have the website up and running, I will look into the feasibility of getting announcements put on there, once I know what is possible, I will let you know.

Work on the restoration of the Templar window is progressing and so are the plans to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the consecration of St Johns. There will be a lot of interesting developments over the next few months and we will endeavour to keep you all informed. As these events are arranged and come to fruition, we look forward to seeing you all there.

He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" Matthew 8:26-27

Kindest regards

Diane & Nigel



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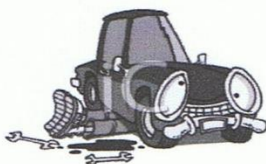
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News from the other side of the ocean!

Dear All,

Checking UK news reports and hearing from friends and family about the awful weather you're experiencing there, makes Arizona feel like a different world!

On Tuesday of last week, we had a rainstorm. It only lasted about ten or fifteen minutes but in that time we got about three quarters of an inch of rain. Chet collects about 80% of the rain water from his roof and he got around 900 gallons. Conserving rainwater is important here and he transfers all that comes off the roof into several other (huge) containers which give him the capacity to collect a total of over 4,800 gallons in all. Good for watering the plants but very important should the pump from the well pack up!

The next day it was a bit drizzly but a beautiful full arc rainbow appeared. The biggest I've ever seen. We didn't find a crock of gold though!!

Spring is definitely on the way. The birds can be seen pairing up and starting to build their nests and there is a green hue as some of the trees start to sprout their new leaves. The snow is rapidly disappearing from the mountain tops too.

I've more or less got the hang of driving the tractor now and I've been given the task of 'grooming the trails' (clearing pathways) on the less cultivated (wild) part of the land beyond the walled garden.

We're off to Yuma on Feb 21st for a few days, meeting up with some 'snowbirds'- friends from the colder states who like to overwinter there. Tell you about it next time.

Very best wishes to you all,

Diane

Belfry Bat

At the end of last year the Editor of *The Ringing World* promoted a scheme called Pathways, which was designed to give bands a structured selection of things to ring during 2020. There were three levels of difficulty, and I signed our practice night band up for the basic level, and our Wednesday peal band for the most advanced level. In both cases the methods suggested are well within our capability with practice, but will give us a bit more variety than we might otherwise have aspired to. On January 15th our peal band rang a method new to them, and in the evening the six at the practice also made a start on the required methods. We ticked another box on Sunday morning when six of the seven present rang a touch of Grandsire Doubles, part of our regular repertoire which is an item in the pathway.

There were only seven at the practice on January 22nd, but we made good use of the time. Seven was also the turnout on the following Sunday, and it was good to be joined by Peter Hough, who we haven't seen for some time. There were several absentees on January 29th, but the six who were present worked hard, and rang two methods to achieve another pathway tick.

February started well with nine on Sunday, and we were very pleased with the ringing. On February 5th last-minute absences limited the turnout to seven. We didn't ring on Sunday February 9th because of the last-minute cancellation of the service, and the practice on February 12th was also cancelled due to an unusually large number of absences.

Phil Gay



W.I. REPORT

‘Payment by Custard Creams’!



It is always a pleasure to receive a visit from Barbara Andrew, accompanied by husband Joe and little dog Toti. On this occasion, her amusing, not to say provocative, talk was entitled “Payment by Custard Creams”, an enigma to be explained as she gave us examples of the problems encountered by public speakers.

Twenty-five years’ experience has provided some interesting experiences, speaking to all kinds of audiences. One of our speaker’s themes which is frequently requested, entitled “My Grandma the Suffragette”, has produced some curious misunderstandings. Grandma was not your actual Emmeline Pankhurst, so Barbara is not her granddaughter, nor, on one occasion, Mrs. Pankhurst herself! Even more strangely, how could anyone think that a talk about female suffrage could be announced as a demonstration of sugar craft?

But this is only the beginning. Perhaps you haven’t been booked at all, then receive a call to ask if you can step in, to replace someone who is unwell – only to learn on your arrival, that the programme arranger expects you to give a talk on the subject booked – like “Icing” (not one of your fortes).

Sometimes the audience doesn’t exactly come up to scratch. You enter a room full of jolly ladies, who have been enjoying cocktails before the meeting, quite unable to sit down, listen, or even stop talking in loud tones. On reflection, it would be better to decline to perform at this time, and suggest another

date (keeping your fingers crossed that they won't bother.) Does your audience fall asleep? and snore? Here's a useful hint: Jump to attention as if inspired by patriotic fervour, announce that we shall now sing the National Anthem in tribute to Her Majesty the Queen, which will cause a general movement and a dynamic closure to your visit.

And then there's the question of payment. Even if, like Barbara Andrew, you have a carefully worked-out scheme based on numbers in audience, those who should pay (in cash) may have alternative ideas, starting with "Can we do a deal?", to an offer (as we don't have any money) of some other reward in kind. This is where the custard creams aforementioned come in. There may have been some earlier event in the hall (party, wedding etc) with leftovers, such as biscuits – a whole box of them, enough to defeat even the keenest biscuit-lover.

And when it comes to a vote of thanks, do they remember your name? Best to prepare your own proposal, and thank your audience for coming to hear you.

Needless to say, with much laughter and applause, Keele W.I. thoroughly enjoyed the insight into the perils of being a speaker, and we all look forward to Barbara Andrew's next visit.

Peggy Chaplin

Next meeting is our A.G.M. at 7.15 p.m. in Keele Village Hall on Monday 2nd March, followed by "Madame de Maintenon's Petticoat". Do you have any interesting petticoats? Bring one along to show!

The Garden Guild

Keele Garden Guild will meet in the Village Hall on March 9th at 7.30pm for the Annual General Meeting and Buffet Supper.

From the Registers

Interment of Ashes

Monday 17th February – Vera (Veronica) Cartwright

Simon Cartwright

Dates for your Diary

Lent Reflections:

On Tuesdays during Lent this year, we'll be gathering for Reflection upon a theme. Each session begins at 11.30 with an opening prayer and a short reflection delivered by Fr Peter. People are invited to contribute a poem(not compulsory) in response to the announced theme. The themes are as follows:

3rd March: Passion & Truth

10th March: Love

17th March: Mystery

24th March: Out of the ordinary

31st March: Called/vocation

7th April: In solidarity, keeping faith

It is anticipated that each session will be completed within an hour/hour and a half. Venues to be announced in church and on the pew sheets, or by contacting the vicar directly.

St Johns Fellowship meets on Monday 30th March, 6.30pm, at the home of Tom and Dorothy Conroy.

Flowers at Easter

Janet would be pleased to receive donations towards flowers this Easter. Her floral displays are always such a delight and with your help she will make our church even more beautiful for this holy season.

Church Officers

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NB Articles for the magazine should be sent to the editor by the 12th of the preceding month.

