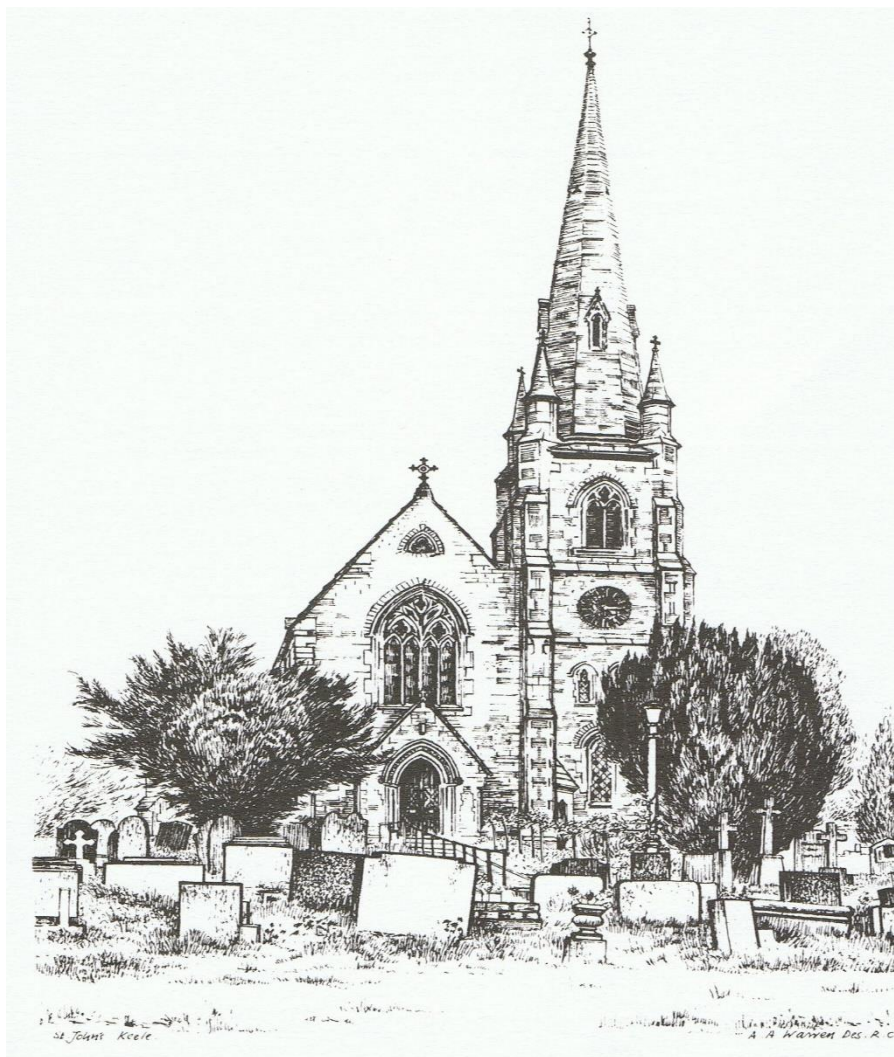


# PARISH MAGAZINE



## St. John the Baptist Church Keele

May 2020

50p

# **Worship at St John's**

**All public worship in the Church of England is currently suspended until further notice.**

**Please consult the Church of England website or the website of the Diocese of Lichfield for up-to-date information.**



**We are in this together**

**Our prayers are with you all**

# From the Vicar's Desk

*The Vicar writes ...*

'It's spring, Jim, but not as we know it!' I do apologise for these words, which sprang to mind as I switched on my computer. Outside is clear and warm and promising; but we shall see little of 'outside' unless we break the law; and I have no intention of doing that.

Life has been so strange, these past few weeks. Nothing has been 'as we know it'. For the first time since (*The Sacrament Act of*) 1547, 'the people' were denied the chalice at the offering of the Eucharist; and now, for several weeks, our church buildings have been closed to everyone and public worship suspended until such time (months away, I speculate) as we might return to our common life free from the threat of coronavirus. Not at any time in our history (except during the time of the 'Commonwealth'?) was Holy Week and Easter not properly celebrated. It's not only spring that isn't as we know it.

Much has happened these past weeks. We've been trying our best to keep in touch during a time when 'touch' is just about what we can't do. Email and telephone are such life-lines – and I suspect the psychological ramifications from our exile will be wounds that will take much and lengthy healing.

Will life ever be the same again? Of course, it shan't! For some people, they've friends, family, neighbours, businesses, to grieve – unable to be with them; unable to 'do anything'. No; life will not be the same. And, for some of us, it won't be the same because we've found aspects of our exile have brought new good things – a sense of togetherness; a sense of what is

really important and what's not, and so on – we'd be silly to call a halt to. Let's hope that we shan't be the same again.

The scene after the Crucifixion of Jesus is also painted in fear and isolation. Luke tells us that the followers of Jesus continued to meet but (out of fear) behind closed doors. Soon – please soon! – let our doors be open to each other, and those to our beloved Temple at St John's so that we may be in touch with each other properly, sharing 'the peace', the common cup, and the beauty of worship.

Fr Peter Jones

Have  
Faith  
in  
GOD

## Co-incidences

When this epidemic is ended there will be many stories across the parish of unsolicited kindnesses from friends and neighbours so I thought I would get my story in early!

When I first came to Keele in 1964, the village shop was the first old cottage adjacent to the Sneyd Arms. Until the recent past, the property was occupied by Jayne and her husband; the new occupant is Gault and his partner. Jayne volunteered to fetch me meat from Baldwin's Gate, whilst Gault fetches me vital supplies of Guinness and Chardonnay. The house may no longer be a shop but its recent and current occupants act like benevolent shop-keepers. Meanwhile my veg boxes comes from Annie who as a child was brought up this very house! Last but not least, my neighbour Sue brings me round a variety of cooked dishes. Oh, and I shouldn't forget Graham who is collecting my medicines.

If this is what is meant by the Big Society then Keele sure is a part of it.

Chris Harrison

# Belfry Bat

On March 12<sup>th</sup> I gave a talk on Bells and Bell Ringing to the Madeley U3A. I had been told to expect an audience of about sixty, but there were only about half that number on account of the virus. My friend Chris Hughes, who rings at Audlem, produced sound demonstrations for me on his laptop. I taught Chris to ring in 1985 when I ran an evening class in ringing for Keele Adult Education Department. He was a software engineer at ICL, and wrote a computer package to improve on the facilities provided by our basic purpose-built simulator. His package is now in use in many towers, homes and mobile phones, and he has been able to make considerable donations to charity as a result.

I had intended to go to the Neil Baldwin 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary service on March 14<sup>th</sup>, but we were told on the previous day that it had been cancelled. On Sunday there were eight at ringing, and we decided not to ring again until further notice. I hope we will be missed! Ro and I also stayed at home instead of going to church. Our Wednesday group was going to continue ringing for the time being, but decided on Monday that we would stop. I hope this crisis does not have a long-term damaging effect on ringing. A high proportion of bands consist entirely or mostly of elderly people, and it is easy to imagine that if they have to stop ringing for several months, as seems likely, some of them may be reluctant to start again. In the meantime, there are plenty of catching-up jobs at home that we can get on with.

On Wednesday March 18<sup>th</sup> Ro, with me in attendance as safety officer, spent forty minutes netting algae from our pond. There was no sign of frogspawn, which is disappointing. Also on this

day we received the formal invitation to daughter Sally's wedding, scheduled for July 3<sup>rd</sup>. The ceremony, at Sheffield Town Hall, is a small affair, so we hope there will be no problem, but there is a party scheduled for the following day which may have to be reconsidered nearer the time.

On Friday March 20<sup>th</sup> Ro and I visited our friend Jean who was working on her allotment at Madeley. We spend a pleasant half hour sitting a safe distance apart, and also managed to have a chat with Ruth Eagle who was working on her nearby plot. Ruth has suggested that the book group which she and Ro belong to should try to have an online meeting.

I had been booked to judge a striking competition for our neighbouring ringing association on March 21<sup>st</sup>, but it was cancelled. We also decided to cancel our booking of the mobile belfry for May 2<sup>nd</sup> and the peal on the following day. Perhaps we should celebrate the 151<sup>st</sup> anniversary of St John's.

Instead of going ringing on Sunday morning, Ro and I went for a walk. Not very far, but it was my first recreational walk since my hip operation. It felt good, and we will go a bit further tomorrow. Our traffic-avoiding route took us up Agger Hill towards Freddie and Cathy's house, but it will be a few days before we reach it. In fact, on Monday we did reach it, and spent a few socially-distanced minutes resting in their garden. When we got home we transferred, with permission, some frogspawn from a neighbour's pond into ours, and while there I noticed some baby newts, which I hope will not predate on the tadpoles.

Googling revealed that newts do eat tadpoles, so I hope we will have sufficient frogspawn. Jane Besley called in the afternoon, and she and Ro spent a pleasant half hour sitting well apart in the orchard. She will be our last visitor for some time.

On Tuesday March 24<sup>th</sup> Steve Mellor phoned to ask whether I thought winding the church clock, which he has been doing, is essential work. I don't think he is going to meet anyone while doing it, but equally I don't think many people would be disadvantaged if it stopped. We decided to stop it, and I suggested to Steve that he should go one afternoon and stop it at 2.50.

Wednesday March 25<sup>th</sup> is the 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my father's birth – if alive he would be one of the oldest in the country. Ro needed hearing aid batteries, and we were told they were essential supplies, so went to Newcastle to collect. While there we went to look at Sainsbury's and found it not very busy, so Ro went in and did a week's shopping. Earlier in the day Ro had a video conversation with Ruth Eagle using *zoom*, the first time we had tried it.

It was strange not to go ringing or to church on Palm Sunday, but the sad thing is we are getting used to not going. We did ring hand-bells at the time we would normally have gone ringing. We are still well, and managing to fill our time without difficulty tidying the garden (mostly Ro) and my shed, which is in the *miracles take a little longer* category. We don't need to go shopping very often, as we have doorstep milk and last week a vegetable box with eggs and bread flour. Yeast was not easy until I thought of the internet, where there is plenty.

I have also been writing articles for *The Ringing World*, the bell ringers' weekly, which is about to have several pages available because there are no peals and quarter peals to report. The paper runs a series called *alternative hobbies*, in which readers describe what they do in the rare moments when they are not ringing. I have written a piece on *Bell Hanging in Miniature*, in which I describe the seven model bells in various scales from one-tenth to one-third I have made over the last sixty years, and

also a longer piece, which will need to be serialised, of my memories of building and operating the mobile belfry. We are assuming that the belfry will have a totally blank year, which will have serious financial consequences.

On April 8<sup>th</sup> I went to sit in the orchard for a while, and noticed that the cowslips are now in full bloom, and spreading. Very pleasing! Also plum, pear and cherry trees with blossom. Good Friday is traditionally the time to plant potatoes. We weren't planning to grow any, but on Saturday Ro found some which were sprouting so she planted them in the newly-refurbished vegetable plot. I spent the day on a long-overdue job – cutting down a coppiced hazel, some of which was as thick as my arm. I'm planning to make a woven hurdle using hazel stakes and willow, also from a coppiced stump.

We marked Easter Sunday by ringing three of the bells in the garage, one of a very few belfries from which bells will have been heard this Easter.

Phil Gay





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

