

## NEWSLETTER 55

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The Parish Church of

**St Werburgh**  
Spondon



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### This week Sunday May 2nd

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## Dairy

### Monday

### Bank Holiday

Tuesday

**7pm**

St Marks meeting

Wednesday

**10.30am**

Livestream Mass online.

Thursday

**7.00pm**

Livestream Mass online.

**8pm**

Future of St Werburgh's, diocesan vision and restructuring. Zoom meeting for anyone interested. Contact Fr J directly for details.

Friday

Fr J day off.

Sunday 9th  
**online**

**10am**

**6th Sunday of Easter Livestream Parish Mass**

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### Prayer list:

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For the people of India and all those suffering through the Pandemic.

For Nazanin Zaghari-Rhatcliffe held prisoner in Iran, for her family and for all political prisoners. Pray for our Government to engage more explicitly with those who are powerless in the face of suffering.

For Fr J and the governors beginning the process of appointing a new headteacher.

We give thanks for all those working in the NHS, those enabling the Vaccines to be administered and those caring for the most vulnerable.

In our Fellowship we pray this week for those who lead morning prayer from the Journey Community.

That we may all consider how we contribute to and how we enable our church to be more the Body of Christ, rather than just receiving...

For those living with mental illness and anxiety as lockdown begins to change.

By name we pray for Anne Raison and for her sister Doris Blurton, John Morris, Janine Clegg, Tina and Michael Dickenson, Jean and Barry Birkin, Andrew and his mum Jean, Ed, Claire, Fiona's Auntie Roz, Maria, Nigel, Cath and all those being treated for cancer.

RIP: Rosemary Lancaster, Susan Ann Beck.

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## Today's Gospel Reading John 15: 1- 8

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I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

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## Rev Kate's reflection on the Gospel.

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‘I am the true vine ... abide in me.’

Those few words from this complex and beautiful passage have a simple yet profound message for us. Abide. Make your home with me, as the Message translation tells us. Make your home with Christ, the true vine.

For some time, I have been captivated by a vision originally shared many years ago by mystic Thomas Merton, which for me creates an image of how it might look if we are truly branches emerging from the true vine. In a brief moment of clarity, he saw every single person connected, all one in love:

*“....walking around shining like the sun ... if only they could see themselves as they really are”.*

For anyone joining us today, perhaps finding yourself in a place of darkness, I hope those words offer hope. To know that you are connected to the one true vine who alone can teach us who we really are and help us to bear much fruit.

But what of those difficult words that follow? What of the branches that are thrown into the fire and burned? How is that image juxtaposed with the words of John epistle from today's Lectionary, that tells us that God is love? How many of us have been conditioned to only hear the bad stuff and believe ourselves to be discarded?

I find myself drawn to Richard Rohr's suggestion that our belief that we are unworthy, withered branches, emerges from the illusion that we are somehow separate from God. It is often the judgements we pronounce on ourselves that keep us in a perpetual cycle of shame and regret and prevent us from

making our home with Christ - who offers us all eternal forgiveness, unlimited love and an unconditional welcome.

If that resonates with you, and I know many are feeling tired and worn down by this past year, I encourage you to discard that voice. To see yourselves as you really are, a branch emerging from the true vine.

I have a confession to make. After Holy Week I fell into a spiritually fallow week or more when that sense of disconnection felt all too real. When I am in that place, disillusion with the world begins to seep through. When I reconnect to the true vine, through contemplative prayer, by allowing times of silence and stillness, the light returns, and I believe I can become a fruit bearer.

Apart from Christ we can do nothing. Apart from him we are more susceptible, more vulnerable to the bad stuff we tell ourselves. No one is discarded or left behind. We are all one flock under one shepherd as we heard from Fr Julian last week.

And in the beautiful poetry in the epistle to the Romans, Paul states clearly that *nothing* will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ. Those extraordinary words ....“neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come ... *nor anything else in all creation* ...” nothing.

Each moment of our lives we are connected to the true vine, it is impossible for us to be disconnected from that the source of life. And there's nothing we need to do except make our home with Christ and be open to that grace. Breathe that in for a moment .. that alone should be a reason for hope and to thank God every day – it is pure gift.

How different might our lives be if we trusted in this foundational promise and lived from this truth?

How often familiarity dulls our perceptions – how often the distraction of life means that we – or dare I say it our smartphones - are more frequently at the centre of our lives than God.

Yet we are connected to the true vine that will only give us more life, more abundance, more love, more healing, less fear of death, perhaps even less fear of life - and the temerity to believe that Christ abides in us.

To reiterate the words of Merton “... *if only they could see themselves as they really are.*”

Friends, if only you could see yourself as who you really are. In God's eyes. A branch emerging from the true vine, bearing much fruit.

That is the message I encourage us all to take from today's Gospel. We originate from the vine. Christ lives in us as we live in him. Through these seemingly endless times of physical separation, in our isolation, our loss, our fearful moments, we are not alone.

All we have to do is be still. Make our home with Christ. Abide.

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## What does the future look like for us?

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Fr J is hosting a meeting this Thursday via zoom prior to the APCM for anyone who wants to join him think about the future.

What do we want church to look like?

How do we engage with our community?

How do we learn?

What about the kids?

How do we link in with the Fellowship?

What about older people?

.... there is also diocesan restructuring and how we contribute to that and what do we as a church expect from the diocese.... Can you contribute, do you have questions... he'd love you to join him **after Mass this Thursday on zoom at 8pm.** The meeting will finish no later than 9pm.

But first a letter from Bishop Libby:

# Diocesan Vision

*‘Strive first for the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.’ (Matthew 6)*

This is my desire for our diocese: knowing we are loved beyond measure in Christ, we are able to offer, with generous faith and courageous hope, life-giving love without restraint. This gift of love, transforming our lives and translated into love passed on, is how I understand the Kingdom of God.

Through 2020 we discerned our vision: ‘the Kingdom of God: good news for all’. The outworking of that vision will shape the coming decade. We are called to proclaim afresh, in this generation, the good news of that Kingdom, seen in transformed lives, through growing church and building community. Who we are, as much as what we do, proclaims the Kingdom - so we will live out our values of generous, faith, courageous hope and life-giving love. To enable us to fulfil our calling we will invest, over the next 5 years, in equipping people, shaping structures and sustaining resources for mission. In 2027, our centenary year we will celebrate 100 years of the work of the Kingdom of God in the life of our Diocese. We will then reflect and review, in preparation for our continuing call for the following decade.

Of course, this is not new. It is a reiteration of ancient, unchanging truth. And, there is much in what we are exploring that has echoes of previous endeavour in the diocese, and deliberately so – we are not reinventing for the sake of it. As we strive to be faithful and fruitful, we must be attentive to those who remind us to be care-ful as well as bold, who counsel us to look back as well as forward and take our time, who ensure we treasure what we inherit as well anticipate all that God has in store for us.

And we also know that the coming of the Kingdom is God’s business: the world, and every community in it, are God’s creation; the Church is not what we make it – but the Body of Christ; lives are transformed by the work of the Spirit. The coming of the Kingdom is God’s business and does not depend on any strategy and is not constrained by any schedule. But

wonderfully, God invites us to join in. That's an undeserved privilege which we are to treasure beyond price – so we do take seriously our plans and choices and decisions.

I have found the image of weaving helpful for thinking how our Vision might work out in practice:

We will frame everything in prayer: in our public worship and private devotion and discipline. This is the necessary reminder, always, that this is God's work.

Our outworking will be given structure by warp of the 5 marks of mission (see p.5 of these resources). These are the things that will give consistency to our weaving. I will give them priority in my own life and ministry, and I will insist they are given priority in the life of the diocese.

The weft of the tapestry are the threads of every aspect of all our lives - every aspect not just the 'religious' bits but also the threads of compassion, creativity and culture, of commerce, of connection, in every context of our diocese. That's extraordinary variety and richness, all shades and tones, all textures and fibres. Everyone can participate and contribute. Our tapestry is reduced and diminished when anyone or anywhere is excluded.

Our Vision is 'the Kingdom of God: good news for all'.

**So, what does the Kingdom of God mean to you and for you – in your everyday life, and in the life of your worshipping community?**

**What will generous faith, courageous hope and life-giving love look like for you?**

The Kingdom is good news not only for us, but for all - for all 1.1 million people in the diocese, including 250,000 children, the 38 million visitors a year, and the nation and world beyond.

**So, how might you – in your everyday life, and in the life of your worshipping community – proclaim afresh, in this generation, the good news of the Kingdom of God to others?**

**What are the ways you might need to equip people, shape structures and sustain resources for this mission in your context?**

# Marks of Mission

The Five Marks of Mission are an important statement on mission. They express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ.

Friends adding to what Bishop Libby has written above I want us to focus on how we as the Body of Christ in Spondon respond to the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion:

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

I hope some of you will join me on Thursday evening.  
Great love to you all

Fr J.





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## Crisis in India

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### **A message from the Church of North India in Delhi:**

“Things are not good at all. People are dying due to lack of oxygen and hospital beds. Corridors of hospitals are full. The poor not even getting an ambulance to take their dead to do the last rites. Many are just burning them on roadsides. Scary and terrible times. Please pray for us. Our hope and trust are in the Lord alone. Please convey my regards to all my Derby friends.”



Bishop Malcolm has dedicated a prayer station in Derby Cathedral which will be a focus for prayers for the people of India, who are suffering devastating consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.



Along with many parishes in the diocese we have strong links with the Church of North India in Kolkata, for us it's a connection that has been primarily through the school.... **So, taking our lead from School we are going to do something practical. On Friday last week (30th April)** Foundation children did a sponsored scooting around the playground to raise funds which we will be sending to The Cathedral Relief Service in Kolkata India, where our sister school (Sukantanagar) is based.

The COVID situation in Kolkata is terrifying and we know that whatever we can send will be much needed. We have set the fundraiser up on Parent Pay OR PLEASE DONATE VIA THE GIVING PAGE AT CHURCH. Simply make your donation and then let Sue Clewes or email [stwhelps@gmail.com](mailto:stwhelps@gmail.com) to let them know what you have donated. Alternatively, you can give a cash or cheque donation to church (payable to church) and we will send all the money on asap to The Cathedral Relief Service in Kolkata.

As we are all getting vaccinated and coming out of lockdown, it is our Christian duty not to let our privilege go to waste, but to help our sisters and brothers in such extreme need.

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## Photo Time

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The children have been enjoying some outdoor play in the Spring sunshine! Edward gets the award for being the first person to swim in the (cold) English Channel this year on a weekend trip to South Devon!





