

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

St John's: A place of worship where all are welcome

Church Services

After four month's compulsory suspension of services, the Government has now given permission for churches to resume public worship once they are able to do so. Worship at St John's (including Sunday services, weddings and funerals) will therefore re-commence at the start of September, once our building re-ordering project is complete. In the meantime, we will continue to broadcast a 10.30am each Sunday morning service on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/stjohnashton

Please do tune in and join us!

I lift up my eyes to the mountains —
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

Psalms 121:1-2

Contacts

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St John's 100 Club Draw

Just a reminder that our 100 club has been suspended until the Sunday Morning Worship services can be resumed in September. Apologies to those who look forward to the monthly draw but they will start again as soon as the restrictions are lifted.



A View from the Vicarage

It's the same, but different. Over the past few months we've all had to adjust to a 'new normal' haven't we? The coronavirus pandemic has compelled us all to do even the most basic daily tasks in a new way – even a trip to the supermarket has involved extra hygiene precautions, more queues and the obligatory social distancing. Despite the loosening of lockdown, life is likely to continue to feel strangely different for some time to come.

Since March my own roles as a vicar and a theological college tutor have been superficially similar, yet deeply different in many ways. I still speak to students and parishioners, but now by phone rather than face to face. I still give lectures and attend meetings, but now "in" Zoom rather than in a seminar room. And I still lead church services, but now from a Facebook page rather than from a pulpit!

The Bible promises Christians that the world to come will be the same as this one, yet also profoundly different. God's new creation for his faithful people will still be physical, we will still have recognisable bodies, and the virtues of goodness, love and generosity will remain as true then as they are today. But so much will differ as well. Death and disease will be no more, suffering and sadness will not be part of this 'new normal'. The best of this world will be preserved, its worst features removed forever. For those who hope and trust in the risen Jesus, our future will be reassuringly familiar yet also wonderfully different. A 'new normal' we can actually look forward to!

God bless,
Phil Weston

News

- **Proverbs Sermon Series** — During July and August our church sermon series will be based on the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament. Proverbs offers us God-given wisdom for life, covering such topics as money, speech, friendship, family life and work. These sermons will form part of our services on Facebook each Sunday at 10.30am, and will also be placed on our church website.
- **The Building Project** — the past month has seen significant progress on our church re-ordering project. Our new heating system has been installed, walls have been replastered, and our new kitchenette and toilets are taking shape. The next steps include laying our new oak floor and the installation of a new audio-visual system. Work is scheduled for completion by the end of August, and we look forward to resuming our services in Church at the start of September.



Left: The new kitchenette and store room being constructed

Above: A general view of the interior of the church with the new heating pipes being installed

same
but different

Pause for Thought by Philip Goodall

'There are none so blind as those who will not see.'

In chapter 9 of St John's Gospel Jesus heals a man who was born blind but the Pharisees (the religious people of the day) failed to appreciate the significance of what they had just seen. There are many things we are unable to see, and many reasons why we cannot do so. Some are so small or so far away that they can only be viewed with the help of either a microscope or a telescope. Then there are things that by nature are invisible: like the wind which we can feel and often hear, some kinds of gas which we can smell, and electricity. Also invisible are all the abstract things outside the range of our bodily senses, such as anger, idleness, courage and kindness. We appreciate some of these, as we do physical beauty, through our senses. They are just as important to us as material objects, and play as large a part in our lives. God cannot be seen but his wonderful creation is visible for everyone to see and admire. Of course there are other ways of seeing. We often use the word 'see', not of seeing things with our eyes, or seeing things that are happening, but with two other meanings, and both important to the Christian. 'To see' might mean 'to understand', 'I get it'. And this relates particularly as we try to comprehend and develop our Christian faith. The other meaning is 'to take notice of'. This is important too as it helps us determine between good and bad and not to miss an opportunity to serve God and other people. So good eyesight in the physical sense is something much to be valued and the ability we would least like to lose. In the spiritual sense of the word too, good sight is just as precious. As quoted from the Church of England Collects, to serve God aright we need to be able to 'perceive and know what things we ought to do'. Sadly, in our Bible passage (John 9), it was the Pharisees who were 'blind', SPIRITUALLY BLIND, and not the man born blind. Jesus gave him his sight, in every sense. I pray that we will continue to have faith like his and closely follow Jesus Christ, the light to the world. There is no better way.

Virtually a Bishop



Tom Meara has been a regular member of St John's congregation almost since he was born so who better to represent us in a virtual meeting with the new Bishop of Chester which had been arranged for the youth of our diocese. Here are some of his thoughts following the meeting.

"The new Bishop, Mark Tanner, recently organised a Zoom meeting for the young people of the Diocese. Due to safeguarding, it wasn't be as interactive as I might have hoped but during the meeting he hosted a quiz for the attendees. Everyone was able to submit questions in advance and, in addition, some people in the meeting were able to ask their questions of Bishop Mark live on line. The Bishop said that he was looking forward to moving back to the area so that he could be closer to friends and family, having trained here. He also asked us what we would want him to do while he was in Chester Diocese with us. One of the ideas raised was a suggestion to organise an opportunity for young people from all of our local churches to come together and the Bishop shared his own plans to serve his new flock from an ice cream van by pulling soft whip cones.

I had hoped to be able to ask Bishop Mark about any plans he may have to help us create a carbon neutral and green community as we worship but there was insufficient time. Hopefully we will be able to ask him in person when he comes to visit our church in Ashton Hayes."

Coronavirus restrictions are relaxing but please continue to take care and keep safe.



The emergency shopping service will cease at the end of July, as those who are currently 'shielding' from COVID-19 have been told by the government that they will no longer need to do so after 31st July. However, the assisted shopping service run by the Timebank and the community shop will continue to operate for those who are housebound or frail. If you were previously an assisted shopping service customer then you will remain on this list. If you wish to register as a new customer for this service then please contact the community shop.

A Prayer

Loving God, be with us as we begin to see what is possible.
 Help us to share your love in our community;
 Inspire us to understand their hopes and dreams.
 Uphold us when we feel weary, comfort us when we feel overwhelmed.
 Bless us as we bless others.
 This day and always.
 Amen.



Future Editions of News from the Pews

The Coronavirus precautions mean that we are unable to make our normal door to door NftP deliveries but it can be delivered electronically so please share the news and contact us at nftp@ashtonhayes.church to be added to our mailing list.

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 Andy Waring Driving Instructor
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St John's Website
www.ashtonhayes.church

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