



REFOCUSSED

THE **PARISH MAGAZINE** OF
ST ETHELDREDA'S CHURCH
WITH ST LUKE'S CHURCH

November to mid December 2020



When I needed a neighbour where were you?

How to talk about mental health

This article was written by Rev Sue Stilwell, Associate Team Minister in the Bishop's Hatfield Team and Chaplain to Methodist Homes (MHA) and Rev Richard Allen, NHS Mental Health Chaplain. Richard and Sue are members of a group in the Diocese of St Albans who seek to encourage our churches to be places of welcome and inclusion and promote positive mental well-being.

The article was first published in our June 2020 issue of Refocused—which was not distributed in the wider parish due to C19 restrictions. Things have moved on since then; with the relaxing of restrictions, then the rise in the number of cases and prospect of increased restrictions. So, at what is probably a time of reawakened or heightened anxiety for many, we thought it might be helpful to reprint the article—Editor

The recent pandemic and consequent lockdown has, for many, been a difficult time. Speak to one person though and their experience of it will be quite different to another. In other words, the situation is the same, but our personal circumstances are not. It is the same for the effects on our mental well-being. Our ability to manage periods of isolation, insecurity in the workplace, working from home, concern for distant loved ones or becoming ill ourselves from the virus are just a few things that may test our lives now. In the foreseeable future as the lockdown slowly reduces this will bring about different kinds of anxiety and fear.

Without doubt, this period of lockdown and isolation will have many unintended consequences, including the effect on people's mental wellbeing. As chaplains, we notice much higher levels of anxiety in our workplaces for both those able to remain in work and those who were furloughed. For those whose work involves health and social care, the anxiety of inadvertently passing on the

virus to anyone, not least vulnerable people, was felt as much as contracting the virus themselves and putting their families at risk.

Anxious family members place pressure on loved ones not to go into work, which compounds the situation. Those who normally appear to embrace all that 'comes their way' instead experience a fear of dying (even though they remain in good health) as they struggle with feeling out of control in a situation far bigger than they and indeed any of us, have dealt with ever before.

Continues inside on page 4



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reflections and prayers

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For private Prayer and
contemplation

A few words from the Rector ... Father Darren

In St Eth's and St Luke's we're holding two main remembrance events this year—you can read more about them on page 3.

To allow the wider parish to stay in contact with us during these strange times, our congregation has raised the necessary funding for cameras to be installed at St Etheldreda's Church.

So the 9.30am Sunday Eucharist service will now be filmed live for you to view in real time, or at your leisure, at home on Facebook.

Because of this we can now offer some of our usual Advent and Christmas services for you to view at home too. In addition, a Living Advent Calendar will show daily Facebook video clips

throughout the season of Advent. There will also be an Advent course on Zoom (find out more about this on page 8).

As usual we will have Christmas trees in St Eth's throughout December. There will be open days to allow you to visit the church and leave prayers for loved ones on the tree's branches.

Further details about this, and all our Christmas services will be announced in the Christmas issue of Refocused which will be out on the 6th December.

Finally, we are offering access to an eloquent and thought provoking sermon, from the Dean of Chapel, St John's College, Cambridge—which addresses the decline of truth telling in the



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world today. If you are in search of insight and wisdom—then find out more on page 5.

A very different kind of ordination service ... Rev'd Kathryn Alford, Curate

On 26th September, I was finally ordained a deacon after a three-month delay, which is why you may have noticed that I've suddenly starting wearing a clerical collar!

If you've previously been to an ordination service in St Albans Cathedral, you will know that the nave is normally packed out with supporters and robed processing clergy.

Taking place during a global pandemic, this year's service was always going to be a very different experience. We were ordained in groups of three, which meant that Bishop Alan, the cathedral team, and the wonderful choir had to lead four ordination services in one day. They must have been exhausted that evening!

We were also only able to have six guests each, which made a congregation of just eighteen for my service. This was quite a strange sight in a building as big as the Cathedral.

Each part of my life was represented at the Cathedral, including a representative from our congregations who kindly came along to greet me outside at the end of the service. I was able to share the day with everyone else I knew through the wonders of online live streaming.

Whilst it would have been brilliant to have more of my friends and family present, there was something very special about this intimate service. It enabled me to really focus on the oaths and declarations I was making before God, and to fully share the moment of ordination with my immediate family who had been such a support to me as I journeyed towards this day.

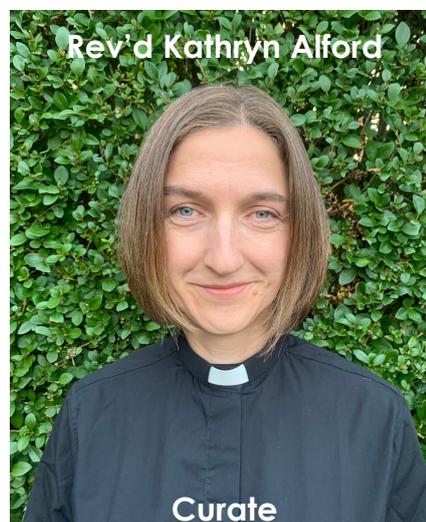
So what does it mean to be a deacon?

The diaconate is one of three orders of ordained ministry in the church, along with the Presbyterate (priests) and the Episcopate (Bishops). Women and men remain deacons for the whole of their lives, even when they go on to be ordained priests and Bishops.

A deacon is ordained to serve with the church and community. This reflects the 'servanthood' of Christ 'who came not to be served but to serve'. This service is offered in all sorts of ways, including pastoral and social care; taking part in leading services; preaching; and teaching. A deacon also performs certain

functions in the Eucharist, including reading the Gospel lesson; preparing the altar for the consecration of the elements; assisting in the distribution of Holy Communion; and dismissing the congregation. You can spot a deacon in services by the wearing of a stole over their left shoulder.

Most deacons are ordained as priests after a year, although some people choose to remain a permanent deacon. It's my great hope that you'll all be able to join me at my priesting service in 2021. In the meantime, I very much look forward to serving everyone in the parish of St Etheldreda with St Luke as a deacon.



A Season of Remembrance

In St Eth's and St Luke's we're holding two main remembrance events this year:

1st November – All Souls

(a day to remember our beloved dead)

St Eth's will be open from 2pm-4pm for you to come in at any time to light a candle and remember a loved one. A member of the ministry team will be available to chat to, and a short reading, reflection and prayer will be said every half an hour.

8th November – Remembrance

(a day to honor the sacrifice of those in war, and to pray for peace)

The council has advised us that, due to C19 restrictions, Remembrance Sunday on 8th November will allow for only 30 attendants at the Cenotaph. Candles can be lit for loved ones at St Luke's Church — which is open on: Saturday & Sunday from 10am to 4pm.

How to talk about mental health *Continued* from front page.....

So, what has become clear, is that there is an even greater need to talk with one another about how this situation affects us and to respond.

This situation shows us just how vulnerable in one way or another we all are and that we really are in this together. It also shows us just how closely balanced survival and struggle really are, as we experience the changes in our usual patterns of daily living, separation from our families and friends and a lack of a clear and certain future. For some, the tables turned and suddenly we experienced what it meant to support others both practically and emotionally in ways we have not done before. What new insights this brought!

It is also interesting to note how our language changed during the lockdown. Already, the term 'new normal' is becoming widely used. We are getting used to the idea that Covid-19 is not a short-term blip, but something that will change individual, family and communal lives and relationships in the long term.

As Sam Wells (the Vicar of St Martins-in-the-Fields in central London) reflected on a recent *Thought for the Day*, the Hebrew Scriptures record a number of grave national events that had a lasting impact on the whole population. He observed that the prophets spoke into these critical situations. They offered words of comfort and solace. Then, and only then, they advanced a vision of a future that could not be based on going back to the past.

Whatever 'normal' was to be, it would not be the normal the populace had experienced before. It will be a new normal. For, Wells concluded, that is precisely what God offers us each time we face an existential crisis, such as Covid-19; the opportunity to be honest with ourselves and each other, reflect on all we are going through, and work out what we might do for the better in the future.

What is clear to both of us in our chaplaincy roles is just how much the various parts of our lives interact with each other. There is no way that we leave our home life at the threshold of work, and

somehow pick it up at the end of our shift; no way that our mental and spiritual wellbeing does not impact on our physical health. It is simply remarkable how many people in the health and social care fields (and others as well) have found the courage to continue working whilst living with the stress, anxiety and trauma of family and friends battling with Covid-19.

That is where neighbours have come in. They appear in all shapes and sizes – work colleagues, delivery drivers, the grumpy person in the flat next door and so on. And, in a crisis such as this, neighbourly roles do not follow the usual patterns. Cleaners listen to managers, children care for parents, health care assistants look out for chaplains. When it comes down to it, we can all be neighbours in a crisis.

The question "Who is my neighbour?" started Jesus off on the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29-37). For the man who was robbed, neighbourliness came from an unlikely source; from someone who should, by all the conventions of the time, have had nothing to do with the victim. Yet Samaritan looked after Jew and God again showed how a new normal could be born.

If all we do right now is to let our mental health emotions, experiences and questions run round our heads, we shall indeed be tested to the limits! But being able to name them and talk about them, whether directly, by phone, Zoom or email, reduces their impact on us. It enables us to manage our mental wellbeing. Not everything gets sorted out, but somehow a problem shared really does feel like a problem halved. *Continued on page 5*

Prayer:

Risen Christ, for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred: open the doors of our hearts, that we may seek the good of others and walk the joyful road of compassion and peace to the praise of God the Father.

Amen.

What is Truth?

A paragraph from the recent Burghley Sermon at St Etheldreda's Church delivered by The Rev'd Canon Mark Oakley, Dean of Chapel, St John's College, Cambridge

' Words are part of the preacher's tool.

But one of the problems for the contemporary preacher is the abuse of language that is now common in the world, especially from those that in the past would have spoken with some authority and trust.

There is what has been called Truth Decay and the haunting question as to whether as a society we are losing interest in truth, whether the idea of there being objective truth, facts, are now less important to us than opinions, crisis chatter or infotainment?

Is to be interesting more important than being right?

Is there a declining value of accuracy, as society's reserve currency?

Is what matters not veracity but impact?

Is dishonesty therefore not held to account as it once was?

Is lying just a laugh that amuses by messing up our systems of value? '

If these words resonate with you then why not listen to the full address delivered at this year's Burghley Sermon in St Etheldreda's Church, Hatfield. The service was filmed and can be viewed at www.facebook.com/StEthshat/ - click on **Videos** and scroll down to find '**The Burghley Sermon**' - the sermon starts at approx. 44 minutes in. Alternatively you can read the full script at this link: www.dropbox.com/s/zcpzt3qq841jc1q/Burghley%20Sermon.pdf?dl=0

How to talk about mental health *Continued from page 4.....*

Maybe, that's what those Hebrew prophets were trying to get at, 2500 years and more ago. The new normal is that which takes our human experiences, including that of our mental wellbeing, and applies new and healthier ways of dealing with them. Perhaps we need to recognise the Samaritans amongst us, those who do NOT think as we do, and embrace them (adopting appropriate social distancing of course!) for what they can offer us and what we can offer them. Then 'them' and 'us' cease to have any meaning as we are all neighbours in the new normal.

Nothing will be lost in this experience; instead it has opened our hearts as we share in the struggle and bear the load. Isn't that exactly what Jesus wanted us to do all along? In the words of John Bell & Graham Maule: the lost Christ shows his face; to the unloved he gives his embrace; to those who cry in pain or disgrace, Christ makes with his friends, a touching place.

Rev Richard Allen's biography

Richard has been involved with mental health work for two decades, initially as a volunteer and, for the last 17 years, as a mental health chaplain within the NHS. He is currently the spiritual care manager at the NHS Trust that provides mental health care across Hertfordshire and beyond.

Rev Sue Stilwell's biography

Sue has been a Chaplain with MHA (Methodist Homes) for 10 years working with people living with dementia and life-limiting illness. Alongside this work, she has been licensed for the last 9 years to the Bishop's Hatfield clergy team in St Albans Diocese.

A letter to the Parish from Jill Knight

Dear friends, after considerable thought and prayer, I have taken the decision to stand down as Choir Director and Organist at St. Eth's with effect from Epiphany Sunday, January 3rd 2021



I have always felt that it was my calling to serve God through music and it has been a wonderful gift of grace as well as an honour to do this for the past seven years at St. Eth's and St. Luke's. Together we have achieved a great deal, and I stress the "together" because none of it could have been done without the support and commitment of the clergy and churchwardens, all our choir members, parents of the choristers, congregation and the wider community. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve God and his people through the music at St. Eth's and thank you for making Mark, me and our daughters feel so welcome.

It is however time for a change. The past few months have given us all some time for reflection and refreshment – even if we have been very busy with "on-line" work. Mark will be retiring early next year and so I have decided to take "semi-retirement" so that we can spend more time together with our family and explore some new opportunities.

I have been involved in church music for many years, and have had the weekly commitment of being a

Director of Music/Choir Director/Organist for thirty years in this country and overseas. We have many wonderful memories from all the churches where we have worked and served, but none more special than our daughter Rebekah's wedding to Richard at St. Eth's in November 2018. Thank you for sharing that with us.

Throughout the lock-down period, our choirs have continued to rehearse online and to provide music for our recorded services. I am most grateful to everyone who supported this. We have now started a carefully risk-assessed, slow return to choral singing with our adult choir and choral scholars at St. Eth's and look forward to bringing Y.E.S! back into church to sing again very soon.

Sadly, due to the nature of my role, it is not appropriate for Mark and me to remain part of your congregation at St. Eth's. This will be the greatest challenge for us, as after many years of working in churches outside our own community, we finally found one locally where we could serve and worship. However, God moves in mysterious ways, and I am sure He has something in mind for us if we will only watch, wait and pray.

There is so much I could say about the joy of serving God through music and singing in particular, but at this challenging time the words of Siegfried Sassoon need to be close to our hearts:

With kind regards Jill

*Everyone suddenly burst out singing
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields;
on - on - and out of sight.*

*Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away ... O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless;
the singing will never be done*

Looking at the South Side of St Eth's: by Mary Rathbone

It's funny how things work out sometimes isn't it?

In the 35 years that I have lived in our parish, the south porch at St Eth's has only ever been opened by special request at weddings or funerals—or for wheelchair access. Otherwise people arrived, and left, through the north porch.

But now because of C19 and social distancing, the Ministry Team, after the Sunday service, process out through the south porch. This allows those who would like to have 'a socially distanced' short chat to go out through the south porch. And those who prefer to go straight home leave by the north porch.

Amongst other things, this has made us realise just how lovely the south side of the church is and gardening that was already in place (by the congregation and local people) stepped up a pace or two.

We have since had several gardening parties and people of all ages, strength and ability have worked at shaping up the area to make it more welcoming for all

I am really pleased to have been a part of this work force. I found it most therapeutic after months of lock down with a social aspect, a good physical workout and fresh air, our dogs loving the free run around but, most of all, it was a chance to work together in a willing team doing something useful.

As I worked on the overgrown ivy and yew, I looked over to the old church hall, and remembered how I wrote an article in the March issue of Refocused, just before we went into lockdown—about how wonderfully the old building had been refurbished.

I remembered how exciting it felt when I was shown around the modernised Victorian school-house, later used as a church hall, and thought how well it could serve Hatfield—but then we had lockdown, and everything came to a halt.

But now, although it seems we are not yet out of the woods, I think perhaps we are a little braver than we were at the beginning of these strange times. People are connecting more with each other.



An example of this connection is when I joined another small gardening party recently; a couple of artists were also working in the Churchyard. One of their drawings from that day is the pen and ink sketch of the south porch above. It looks directly out over the to the old school and church hall.

James Robinson, the artist, told me that his mother had been a teacher at the old school house. The moment felt special to me—because I thought of how important this area has been to past generations and that it had become rather dilapidated, but was now coming back to life again.

This is important because not only is this space consecrated land, it is also of special local historical interest as the highest point in Hatfield and the land that gave birth to the wider modern town.

So why not help us breathe even more life into the area again by visiting it, and using it? Bring children and dogs, if you can, to enjoy the wild life in the green land surrounding 'your' parish church.

In this season of remembrance, you might also like to visit the area to remember loved ones departed. To simply walk, or sit in the consecrated green space and reflect on the past surrounded by the autumnal beauty of nature.

Lent Course in Advent

John Barnard

In March of this year we started a Lent course entitled 'Meeting God in Mark'. We got to week two and then everything stopped for lockdown.

Things have moved on since then and we can now meet via Zoom in the comfort of our own homes and completely safe. It is therefore our intention to run this course again using that medium.

We shall start from the beginning rather than taking up where we left off so that anyone who was not with us last time can be involved. If you were with us previously I look forward to welcoming you back, if not, then you will be equally welcome.

We shall begin on Monday 23rd November and meet each week at the same time up to and including 21st December. Five weeks in all. We shall start at 6pm and finish by 7:30pm each week.

The course is based on a book by Rowan Williams called Meeting God in Mark. It would be helpful for you to have sight of this book. If you have difficulty in getting a copy, we can get one for you.

We start the course by finding out more about Mark and then exploring this, the shortest of all the gospels and believed to be the first written. You would undoubtedly find it helpful if you could read Mark's gospel at least once before the course starts to get a flavour of what it has to say.

If you are interested in this course you will need to register with me so that I can send you the Zoom link. Please send me your email address and your permission to contact you with this information.

If you have any questions or queries about this course, please get in touch with me. I look forward to hearing from you. My contact details are:

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Please contact—maryrathbone@icloud.com if you have any editorial contributions.

hyh

Herts Young Homeless

*Knitting is
the new yoga
(apparently)*



*St Mary's Church in North Mymms has been
knitting blankets for the homeless for 5 years.*

*The blankets are for young people who are coming out
of council care and setting up their first homes.*

*We are going to join St Mary's efforts and start
knitting the squares that make up the blankets.*

Is this something you would like to help with?

*The soothing effect of knitting can be quite relaxing
too—so it's a great win-win winter activity*

Contact: maryrathbone@icloud.com 😊

The Herts Young Homeless charity at Gracemead House,
in Hatfield Town Centre, helps young people in Herts aged
18-24 who are coming out of care, to establish their first homes.

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