

# LINK PLUS++++

## Special Edition – October 2020

Friends

Is life going to get back to normal?

Yes, I believe it is, but not just yet. There is a difficult winter ahead for our world and for our church. There will be those who will have their freedoms restricted (some more than others), there will be churches that will not be able to do the things they want to. Even our normal Remembrance and Christmas activities may need to change.

I have never know a time of such uncertainty in my lifetime, and perhaps I now have an inkling of what it must have been like in wartime, when concern about the outcome was not the certainty of history, but a present worry and reality. That is not to say that the loss of life in this country during the pandemic so far has been anything like the extent of the horrific tally of the wars of the last century, but as I write, around the world there have been 1,000,000 (1 million) official Covid related deaths. And those are just the ones that have been recorded as such! In most countries, even perhaps our own, the official number falls way short of the actual reality.

For many, in times of wars both past and present, comfort was/is found in the certainties and promises of faith. To believe in a

faithful God reassured and gave hope to the future. To believe in a God who had conquered death provided strength to do what must be done, and comfort for those who mourn. To know Jesus as Lord and Saviour gave a way to follow, a truth to proclaim, and a life to lead.

And so it remains today. The church often struggles to find a way to affirm these things amongst its people, and get these messages out into the community, but struggle it must, struggle we must. Our world today, and each one of us, needs more than ever to hear the message of sins forgiven, death overcome, and the firm promises of God for all people. For we are all made in God's likeness, and equally loved by God.

Keep safe, keep well, and may you know God's blessing.

Steve

**P.S.** Our mission on the Mead Fields Estate in Weston Super Mare is just about to start. We need your prayers for Deacon Gary and the team he is drawing around him to do this work. We are being provided with a portacabin (a real answer to prayer) in order to do this work, which Gary will use as a base for the work. We are using some of the furniture from Church Road and Victoria for this purpose.

The first step is to supply 'welcome packs' for those who will be moving onto the Estate. If you would like to help in any way, please make yourself know to Gary, or to me.

## Brean

'Forsake not an old friend, for the new shall not be like him. A new friend is new wine; let him be old, and thou shalt drink him with pleasure.'

*(Ecclesiasticus 9.10 in the translation of Miles Coverdale 1535. As quoted by Diarmid McCulloch in his recent and acclaimed biography of Thomas Cromwell)*

As I read this it seemed appropriate to us in our churches during this time of Covid-19. We came back into church some weeks ago and there were our old friends, arrayed around us two metres apart, but still friends even after months of separation. Changes to our lives and our lifestyle, some of them quite drastic, had come upon us, but there our friends still were. And when we say old friends we mean both in years (well most of them anyway) and in years of friendship.

That doesn't stop us making new friends and we already have a new friend among us. In that our friendship grows as new wine matures (for that is the meaning of the second sentence of the quotation) so will the depth of fellowship increase the pleasure.

In McCulloch's book, the quotation introduces a chapter on the year 1531 when Cromwell, vulnerable after the death in disgrace of his mentor and friend Cardinal Wolsey, suddenly found himself elevated to the Council of Henry VIII's court. It was a time when he needed to work out who were his real friends, who were those who professed friendship simply because of Cromwell's new status, and who would be his enemies and would stay such (until his end nine years later). Cromwell did a great deal to introduce the Protestant cause in England and was instrumental in making

Coverdale's version of the Bible available in churches, the first bible translated in full into our language.

We are told that the current Covid restrictions could be with us for another 6 months and the value of friendship over that time will be inestimable. The question of mental health is getting a lot more airtime now and friendship is a vital element in that process. For those churches that are open, our services provide a valuable medium for fellowship.

But we also live in a time when modern electronic communication can be of great value. I am surely not the only one who has concerns about people's mental health and the importance of our Zoom connections that we enjoy during the week should not be underestimated in this regard. It is not the full works of course, only face to face contact manages that, but Zoom can be a satisfactory substitute and is very easy to connect up with if you have a computer or phone with web access. It is also a useful medium for our minister to keep in touch with us.

All that you then need is to click on the link that Steve will send you, and 'hey presto' a new vista opens before you. There are about 15 of us who link into the Wednesday morning (10am) bible study which is on Mark's gospel. There is much encouragement to say your piece and everyone's view is respected. Even those who have studied the gospel find out new things and with half a dozen who are preachers being members of the group, there are considerable variances in interpretation. We then get up to twenty people joining in the very informal on-line coffee morning on Thursdays at 11am which also produces a good share of laughter. There is also a Zoom service on Sundays for those who can't get to a physical church.

If we really are going to run through a winter of restrictions caused by Covid, these Zoom opportunities provide us with a real chance to keep our spirits up. I do commend it all.

At Brean, all of our regulars are worshipping almost every week, several of our summer visitors have worshipped with us too. They are some of our old friends and it is a delight to see them and to be able to talk outside albeit only too briefly. We don't get quite so many occasional summer visitors this year but we still hope that those who do come feel welcome.

We held our Church Council last week and resolved to keep our services going through the winter for as long as we can even if we have to hold the doors and windows open. Coats and blankets at the ready then.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> it will be our Harvest Festival, shared by our Anglican friends worshipping with us. It is a pity that we shan't be able to have lunch together afterwards, but we shall decorate the church as far as we are able and allowed and give thanks for the bounty around us.

For my oops! moment this week, I reported last month that Margaret and Marjorie were resident at Towans. This should have been Tudor Lodge of course. My apologies.

Judy has chosen the poem this month. It's Keats' Autumn, you know the one, it begins 'Season of Mists and Mellow Fruitfulness....' Keats wrote it during the period of the artistic movement called The Romantic Era. Simon Schama in a TV series recently reminded us that the Era could be seen as a reaction to the Enlightenment period, where reason and logic grew out of the Industrial Age, and Capitalism funded its growth.

Romanticism is still with us Schama said and he developed his thesis in two ways; first in the intense nationalism which so often follows defeat or depression. He cited the rise of Nazism which followed German military defeat and the great financial crash of the late 1920s, and I couldn't help but wonder whether he was also looking to parallels today. And the second way is the ability to see the world around us and all that is in it, as connected into a universal and integrated whole. Wordsworth's poetry was like that, 'Daffodils' anyone? And where he saw the whole countryside and the promise that was inherent within it as one inter related entity. And so was Keats' poetry too. The picture he painted in his verse could not be drawn as one picture viewed on any one day, but it drew together the whole autumn season into one glorious scene. This he seems to say is the scene to hold, this is what was the ideal remembered from before the Industrial 'catastrophe' took over. Here is the whole poem, but take heed especially of the last verse. As it looks back, it sees the past with wistful eyes, and yet it says there is much today to glory in; so hold on to those truths, hold on to that glorious wholeness, and make the most of what is good in what you see around you:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too -  
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft  
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Have a good month everyone  
Harvey Allen

## **Burnham**

Hi everyone hope all is ok. It's nice to be back in church, but who's behind the face mask?

We are entering autumn, leaves are changing colour, leaves are falling. I am hoping to see my family this Friday after a year. We will get through this. History has taught us to be strong and fight the challenges on a daily basis. We are not alone - it was lovely to hear this on a cd at a recent service.

Monday evening, enjoying the last rays of sunshine, I leaned over my fence and looked into the rhyme below. Suddenly a bird flashed by, were my eyes deceiving me, a kingfisher. I waited for its return. It didn't disappoint. I was very privileged to see this exotic coloured bird.

That's all for now.

Ann Smith.

## **East Brent**

This is not the usual contribution to the Link magazine that I am asked to write. Harvest Festival time is here again but not as we normally see it. Not the garden produce we see presented at the front of the church, but a long line of tins. Nevertheless, we celebrate in this strange way the goodness of God. The tins were given to the Foodbank.



We are thankful that various Ministers and Preachers have come to our service on Sundays since we re-opened after the Lockdown. We are lucky to have enough space and congregation to accommodate both. Grateful thanks to Jill and Gordon who see all masks and sprays are in position week by week. It is good that we can meet otherwise some of us wouldn't see each other at all because we live so far apart and some do not have modern conveniences such as internet and Zoom.

We journey on in hope that in God's good time we shall get through this time and come out stronger on the other side, whenever that will be.

Evelyn Tucker

### **West Huntspill**

We held our September Church Council last Monday, the 21st Sept, the first time we had all been able to meet together since March. It was good to be able to meet and share in prayer together. However the necessity of having the front doors open made it very difficult to hear what people were saying above the relentless roar of the traffic going past on A38.

It was also unfortunate that the numbers of Covid infections were just starting to rise rapidly, so we, regretfully, felt that it was sensible not to start services yet. We have arranged another meeting for the beginning of December to reassess the situation.

Maureen Cavill

# PLUS +++ POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER MESSAGES

## Evelyn Tucker writes:

I came across a poem this week from which I have taken a couple of verses which I felt worthy of repetition.

September month of summer's end  
of harvest gathered in  
of jam and pickles being made  
before winter days begin.

For Autumn now is with us  
as for Winter we prepare  
but Spring bulbs are being planted  
with gardening hopes to take us there.

The days are growing shorter now  
but once the curtains have been drawn  
there are cosy evenings to be treasured  
as a new season is born.

## Congratulations

Huge congratulations to Nicola and Lewis Winder and all their family on the birth of Nancy Jade Winder born on Friday 25th September at 10:20am. All are doing well.

Maddox is delighted to have a baby sister.

Maureen Cavill has sent this for us:

## Thunderstorms



A little girl walked to and from school daily. Though the weather that morning was questionable and clouds were forming, she made her daily trek to school. As the afternoon progressed, the winds

whipped up, along with lightning. The mother of the little girl felt concerned that her daughter would be frightened as she walked home from school. She also feared the electrical storm might harm her child. Full of concern, the mother got into her car and quickly drove along the route to her child's school. As she did, she saw her little girl walking along. At each flash of lightning, the child would stop, look up, and smile. More lightning followed quickly and with each flash, the little girl would look at the streak of light and smile. When the mother drew up beside the child, she lowered the window and called, "What are you doing?" The child answered, "I am trying to look pretty because God keeps taking my picture."

May God bless you today and every day as you face the storms that come your way!



May God's blessing  
surround you each day  
as you trust him  
and walk in his way.

May his presence within  
guard and keep you from sin  
go in peace,  
go in joy,  
go in love.  
Amen.