

ST DENYS CORONACLE

19th February 2021

Vicar's Message

Perhaps it takes a pandemic to make us realise how fragile and vulnerable our human existence is. For many the past year has been a time of re-evaluation: things that we took for granted have changed beyond all recognition. In the early months of the pandemic there was a sense that 'it will soon all be over, and life can get back to normal'. That notion now seems hopelessly optimistic! I have got used to my children being around the house all day – ostensibly doing their schoolwork. I don't miss going to the shops (but then I never liked shopping much), but I do miss meeting with people. Zoom meetings save on travelling time (and the meeting generally take less time) but it is not the same as meeting with people face to face. Church services are very different but there is something about the simpler style that I have grown to appreciate.

As we move into Lent the gospel reading for Ash Wednesday reminds us to 'lay not up treasures on earth' – it begs the question 'what are our treasures?' Through the changes of the pandemic things that were important perhaps seem less so now... things that we took for granted now have greater importance for us. Time and again I have heard people comment that the thing that they struggle most with is the isolation – the loss of human contact. Contact Bubbles may help but for many the reduction to a physical contact circle of no more than six people is life limiting. Advertisements may tell us that the road to happiness is through consumerism – the more 'stuff' we buy, the happier we will be – but the changes of the pandemic show a different narrative. It is not so much the things that we buy or own that bring happiness but the people that we share our lives with. The consumerist narrative might generate short-term satisfaction, but the happiness is often shallow and short-lived, always needing another boost. This is not just a modern phenomenon: the people of Jesus' time bought and hoarded 'stuff' to make them happy, but it could rust away to nothing or be stolen – its intrinsic value was shallow. Jesus encouraged his followers to find a different path – to lay up treasures in heaven. But what might this mean? To follow Jesus is to walk the way of the cross and we do that in a community. We walk the way of the cross when we carry the light of Christ into the dark places of this world bringing love, hope, compassion, justice, and freedom. This speaks of the importance of relationships, of engaging with others. Perhaps this pandemic has enabled us to focus on the things that are really important.

Fr Philip

PSALMS AND BIBLE READINGS

Lent I: 21st February

Genesis 9.8-17, Psalm 25,
1 Peter 3.18-end, Mark 1.9-15

Lent II: 28th February

Genesis 7.1-16, Psalm 22,
Romans 4.13-end, Mark 8.31-end

Lent III: 7th March

Exodus 20.1-17; Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 1.18-25, John 2.13-22

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY BOXES

I have been notified by the Society that due to the pandemic, our usual opening in March has been delayed. Please just continue as normal and when the paperwork is released I will be in touch about the arrangements.
Brenda Hitchcock.

Bible verse

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. *Matthew 6.19-21*

PRAYER

(BCP Collect for Ash Wednesday)

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The next full copy of the Coronacle will be published on Friday, 5th March 2021. Please send any items for inclusion to the Parish Administrator.

CHURCH OPENING

In line with guidance from the Church of England, the church will be open during February for private prayer on Wednesdays between 10am and 12pm.

Sleaford Parish Office

www.sleafordparishchurch.co.uk

office.stdenys1@btconnect.com Parish Office number during Covid19 - 01529 488409

Rev'd Philip Johnson - 01529 304348

Twitter: Sleaford Vicar @ VicarSleaford / Facebook: Sleaford Parish Church