



Letter #56 Church Family email 28/1/2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” [James 4:8 ESV]

I am sure that we are all left shocked and numbed by the recognition that Covid has claimed more than 100,000 lives in under a year in the UK alone. Behind each statistic is a world of pain, sorrow and devastation. It must be pretty bewildering for our politicians given the vast and complex issues that they face. Yet the reality is, without apportioning any blame at all, that their words have often counted for very little indeed. They have not been able to deliver what they have promised. Rather than criticise we need to pray for them. But we also need to turn to the One who does deliver on His promises. And this promise in James 4:8 is such a simple one. When you, in all your weakness and frailty, draw near to God, He promises to draw near to you.

January Services all online:

Anecdotally as a Church family we probably know far more folk who either have Covid or need to self-isolate than in the first lockdown. It highlights why we need to continue to offer our services online. To access all our services, go to the [website here](#). Sunday services are followed by Zoom Coffee, the links or details can be found on the service pages on the website: [St Nicholas](#) / [Lady Boswell's](#).

Sunday 31st January we will be holding the following services online:

- **10am from St Nicholas on YouTube**
- **10am from Lady Boswells on YouTube**
- **6:30pm on Zoom**

Prayer focus for Sunday and next Tuesday

1. Please pray for all those within the Church family who are key workers, especially remembering a number from the medical profession.
2. Please pray for the preaching of God's word on Sunday: Angus (Judges 4) and Jamie Read (Romans 6:15-23) in the morning and Gavin McGrath (1 Peter 2:4-10) in the evening.
3. Please give thanks for all those within the Church Family who are assisting with the provision or support of Foodbanks and for various ministries of compassion in these days.

Please also note that this **Tuesday 2 February 2021** we will be running 4 congregational prayer gatherings. Simply head to the website and select which congregational prayer gathering you wish to attend.



Orchestra Sunday!

Peter Harlow has very kindly gathered a virtual orchestra once again. All the musical items at the services streamed from St Nicholas on Sunday morning and Sunday evening will feature the orchestra. It is a huge undertaking but through Peter's initiative it has enabled many to be kept connected. I trust that it will be the means of many being further encouraged in their walk with the Lord. Perhaps you could use the opportunity of these orchestra services to encourage others to tune in to our services?

Lent Books: An Ocean of Grace & Hope in the face of Suffering

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday 17th February 2021. We have often suggested devotional reading for this season. This year Tim Chester has produced a very helpful daily selection of prayers entitled '**An Ocean of Grace**' - £5. Also, Jeremy Marshall has compiled 20 daily devotions for tough times '**Hope in the face of Suffering**' - £1.50. Both books are very warmly commended. Please note that due to the lockdown books ordered can only be picked up from the Church Office on Thursdays between 10am and 2pm. Please follow all the correct protocols in terms of face coverings and social distancing if coming to the Church Office to demonstrate love for each other. You can [order either book here](#).

Matt Taylor: Associate Rector

I am delighted to announce that Matt Taylor has been appointed to be Associate Rector with responsibility across the church family but with a particular focus at the 11am congregation. He was interviewed several weeks ago by a panel including the Bishop of Maidstone and the Archdeacon. He will be formally licenced within our Zoom evening service at 6.30pm Sunday 7 February 2021 by the Bishop of Maidstone. On the recommendation of the diocese, he is taking a short two week break so that on his return it will be clear that he will commence serving as Associate Rector. As you give thanks for Matt, Sally and Lily pray for God's wisdom and strength in his new ministry.

Church Office Assistant

We have a vacancy in the Church Office for a part time Office Assistant. It would be wonderful to find someone from within the Church family who would be keen to serve in this way. To get further details about the [salary and terms click here](#) or please [contact Sue Stimson](#).

Fellowship Fund and Pastoral care

We recognise that many people are struggling within this lockdown. I know that many within the Church family are seeking to be pro-active in caring for the needs of others both within and beyond the fellowship. Please remember the existence of the Fellowship Fund which is designed to provide practical financial support when members of the church family hit difficult days. Please feel able to [contact Nigel Gavin](#) who chairs the Fund on behalf of the church family. All communications are kept confidential.



Toolbox 2021

This year Toolbox will be delivered online. Given all the demands and pressures we have decided to streamline our approach and offer one seminar each Sunday evening at 6.30pm, as follows.

Sunday 21 February 2021 – Living in Love and Faith: Angus MacLeay

Sunday 28 February 2021 – How do I share my faith? Rebecca Manley Pippert [author]

Sunday 7 March 2021 – Covid, Climate and the Church: Dr Ruth Valerio [Tearfund]

Further details about each seminar are available [here](#).

Finally, a song and a prayer

The song is '[Nearer my God to thee](#)' by Sounds like Reign. I trust it will encourage us to draw nearer to the Lord Jesus in these days.

The prayer is the Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Epiphany and includes a desire that the gospel would shine into the hearts of many in these days:

*God our creator, who in the beginning commanded the light to shine out of darkness: we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, **shine into the hearts of all your people, and reveal the knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.***

Warmly in Christ,

Angus MacLeay

To access the links in today's letter, please use the details below:

Click here	Sunday services details
Click here	To join the after-St Nicholas Service Zoom coffee at 11:15am
Click here	To join the after-Lady Boswell's service Zoom coffee at 11:15am
Click here	To order the Lent or Generosity Project book
Click here	For further details about the Office Assistant vacancy
Click here	To contact Sue Stimson about the Office Assistant position
Click here	To contact Nigel Gavin about the Fellowship Fund
Click here	For details of the Toolbox sessions
Click here	To listen to 'Nearer my God to thee'