

For enquiries please contact Revd Dr Robert Brown

Priest-in-Charge, Bewcastle, Stapleton and Kirklington with Hethersgill

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Notices

From the Registers.

Wedding

Tuesday 3rd November 2020, Lucy Charnock and Kevin Taylor at St Cuthbert's, Bewcastle

Sunday and Christmas Services

In the present circumstances it is extremely difficult to make any plans for the coming month, or for our Christmas celebrations. The only certainty is that, even if we are allowed to meet together in church, we won't be allowed to sing. That means we cannot have our traditional carol services. So the following services are offered in the hope that we will be able to meet in church, and celebrate the Lord's Incarnation. But at least we can sing at home; so we are encouraging everyone to stand on their doorstep at 7pm on Christmas Eve, this holy night, and offer our worship to God by singing Silent Night together while we are apart. The words are included overleaf.

Sunday 13th December, 10am Morning Prayer, St Mary's Hethersgill

Christmas Eve, Thursday 24th December, everyone is encouraged to sing "Silent night" on their doorsteps at 7pm. (Words overleaf)

Christmas Day, Friday 25th December, 10.30am Holy Communion, St Mary's Stapleton. We have not had a service of Holy Communion in the benefice since the first lockdown began in March. Communion will be in one kind only, the bread, and we will have a system whereby everyone who wishes to receive can stay socially distanced. There is no obligation to receive Holy Communion at the service, and everyone is welcome, including children, who may like to bring a favourite present to show everyone.

There are numerous online carol services planned, which you are encouraged to join in if you are able.

Churches will be open for individual private prayer (except Hethersgill). However, if you wish to use the church, please adhere strictly to distancing rules if you meet anyone else there and clean your hands before and after entering. Hand sanitiser is provided. Please also do not handle any books in church.

Funerals: The maximum number of people that can attend is 30, including the officiant, undertaker, and pallbearers.

Weddings and baptisms: at present we do not know whether weddings or baptisms will be allowed in December. If you are consider having your child baptised, please wait until the New Year before exploring possibilities.

Prayer Resources. There is a series of 15-20 minute Morning Prayer videos with a Celtic flavour that I have produced, focussed on the life of St Cuthbert. Please do use these as and when you feel able. They are not specific to any particular day, nor do you need to do them on consecutive days – just when you find you are able. They are available on the Bewcastle House of Prayer Website (www.bewcastlehouseofprayer.org.uk), where this newsletter can also be viewed or downloaded.

As the distribution of paper copies of the newsletter is severely restricted at present, we have arranged several pick-up points around the Benefice where you can collect a copy from a box. These are: Kirklington Church porch, Hethersgill Church porch, Stapleton Church, Bewcastle Church, Stapleton Parish Hall Porch, Smithfield Garage office, Garry Phillip's Garage, and Mary Phillips, 7 Sleetbeck. This Newsletter can also be downloaded from the following sites: www.Bewcastle.com/news-events, www.BewcastleHouseOfPrayer.org.uk/parish-notices

Deadline for the January 2021 issue is 1pm on Saturday 19th December to Tricia Coombe, Damhead, Lyneholmeford, Roweltown, CA6 6LQ. 016977 48833 or triciacoombe@damhead.me

Dear Friends,

We come to the end of a dark and difficult year – difficult in so many ways. The impact of the response to COVID-19 has been devastating locally, nationally, globally. There are those who have contracted the virus in our own community, some of whom have suffered, a few who have died. Their families have struggled with the worry and pain of not being able to visit, of separation, with exasperation at the restrictions. And the impacts on those whose ability to work has been seriously curtailed, or whose income has dried up, makes the economic impact on them extremely hard to bear; they have borne a particularly heavy burden for the sake of everyone's health and safety.

Perhaps the most destructive impact on our community, though, has been the level of fear that has been injected into so many people's lives, particularly those who are now called 'vulnerable'. Many individuals, I know, have had their confidence to come out of their homes and meet others, shattered. Each venture requires courage to overcome that fear. The widespread pervasion of this fear tears the fabric of community; it is difficult to see if the confidence and joy that comes from meeting together will ever be restored. It may be that the promise offered by the potential vaccines will allow that confidence to be restored, but we will have to wait and see. Will people be comfortable singing together again? Or sharing the chalice at Holy Communion? That principle of 'one bread, one cup, one body' is foundational to the Christian message that communion between us is the essence of what makes us human.

But COVID-19 is not the only difficulty that has arisen this year. The eruption of the Black Lives Matter (also) movement in America, precipitated by police brutality, spread quickly to cities around the UK. All this as we have watched the unfolding of American politics, culminating in the recent elections, which has shaken the fabric of democracy. These events expose a deep loss of kindness in Western society that could, eventually, reach us here in north Cumbria. The shift that we see in millions of ordinary people's decisions to choose to vilify others, based on little more than prejudice and fear, has echoes of some of the most terrifying periods of recent history. It has to do with the 'demonisation' of those with whom we disagree, who are not like us, where the 'other' is no longer a person, a 'thou', but a 'them', an object of fear or derision. This trend in American society is not confined to the USA; we see it in many other countries where the rhetoric of 'us' and 'them' is used to create division on the basis of fear, 'divide and rule'. We had the same language used in the Brexit debate, and we see it being used, for example, of those who die crossing the channel and are labelled as 'illegal immigrants' before they even reach our shores and their case is heard: the so-called 'hostile environment.' It derives from a lack of kindness towards other human beings, especially those who are 'not us'. We see the same absence of respect when our Servants of the State choose brush aside their own shocking behaviour while in public office. It is a deeply worrying trend that starts to pervade the rest of society.

Which brings us to Christmas. At Christmas we celebrate the mystery of God becoming one of us – what we call 'the Incarnation'. But who is this 'us'? Jesus was born in abject poverty to a young Jewish virgin and her fiancé in a cattle byre, in a small town heaving with an influx of people, yet almost completely unnoticed, in a remote part of occupied war-torn Palestine, two thousand years ago. In one sense, he was nothing like 'us'; he was one of 'them'. It was only as his life unfolded, as we listened to his teaching, saw the way he treated the outcasts, the underprivileged, 'them', and spurned those in power, that we began to realise what he was about. His stories about the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son turned the tables, and gradually revealed to us that we are the 'them', the outcasts, that he came to call his friends. His death on the Cross, his Resurrection from the dead, his Ascension into heaven, and then his gift of the Holy Spirit demonstrate the profound depth of his passion and love for each one of us – and for every human being. They are the actions that carve out the path for us, no longer afraid because we are loved even though he knows how horrible we know we really are on the inside. They allow us to pick up his words that shine with a bright light, tenderly offering us hope, and follow him out of the tunnel and back to life, back to the arms of the loving Father. In other words, it was precisely this fracturing in 'common humanity' that God was healing in himself in Christ. Because of this, every single human being, whether we agree with them or not, is a 'thou', and worthy of kindness.

In our benefice, that kindness and generosity towards neighbours, towards the 'other', who we see as a 'thou' and not a 'them', has shone through our communities during this year. The care, concern, and practical giving, whether it be by phone, or running errands, or quietly praying is a tangible demonstration of God's love in us. This Christmas, let us remember the Incarnation, and strive to ensure we always keep its promise alive towards everyone we encounter. And may God bless you and your families with kindness and love this Christmas.

Revd Robert Brown

The Knowe Church "Virtual" Christmas festival 16th to 19th December Photographs of your indoor or outdoor displays (small or large) will be uploaded to the "Friends of the Knowe Church" Facebook page for everyone to vote for their favourite. Please let us know via messenger, email theknowechurch@hotmail.com or phone (48752/48024) by Friday 20th November if you would like to take part. To raise money for the Church there will be Christmas cakes, hampers, wreaths and gifts for sales, details on the Facebook page or email for info.

Bewcastle Book Swap This is a new facility for our area and you are invited to come and choose a book or two to read – then return it and change for another! Our own mini library: Wednesdays 10.30 – noon, Roadhead Village Hall – completely free of charge. Returned and donated books will be kept separate for a week before being reintroduced.

The Bewcastle Cancer Research UK committee are delighted to announce that despite not being able to hold their annual whist drive and draw this year they have still managed to raise £1812.98 which was only made possible by generous support from the local community. This also includes donations made earlier this year in memory of Jean Elliot and Glorian McGuire, plus monies given from the sale of a texel lamb at C&D. auction mart kindly donated by Harry Gass. A big thank you to everyone.

Silent Night

Silent night! Holy night!

All is calm, all is bright

Round yon virgin mother and child!

Holy infant, so tender and mild,

Sleep in heavenly peace!

Sleep in heavenly peace!

Silent night! Holy night!

Shepherds quake at the sight!

Glories stream from heaven afar,

Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!

Christ the Saviour is born!

Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night! Holy night!

Son of God, love's pure light

Radiant beams from thy holy face

With the dawn of redeeming grace,

Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!

Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!

Dear Neighbour

It will come as no surprise to learn that our parish churches have suffered a catastrophic fall in income during 2020. We are blessed in our benefice to have four truly beautiful churches, all very different, but all with small congregations that grow smaller over time. This year we have been unable to plan or consider holding any of our regular seasonal fundraising events to help bolster our church finances. Right now, we would be planning our Christmas Fayres.

It is therefore with our sincere thanks and appreciation that we wish to thank everyone who has contributed financially to our churches over the last year. More recently we have received donations from those who have been unable to attend church which have also been gratefully received. But a special 'shout out' must go to a small band of our parishioners who have literally kept us afloat by supporting our churches through the setting up of monthly direct debits or standing orders. This increasingly popular way of giving really has proved to be a lifeline for us each month, and each penny of your money is such a gift - we really cannot thank you enough. You all know who you are!

That said, expenditure has far outstripped income this year for each of our churches, and we have existed by using up our meagre savings, and, in some cases, having to renege on our pledges to support the ministry we receive, for which our diocese pays. We still face the prospect of further COVID uncertainty, impacting on our ability to come together to celebrate, hold services in church and fundraise in 2021. Our running costs - insurance, utilities, fire protection, servicing and repairs, let alone ministry costs - far exceed our projected income. We are now actively scrutinising each penny we spend to preserve our diminishing funds, and taking a much more proactive approach to our finances as we now seek to secure the very future of our parish churches.

Which is where you, dear reader, can help too. You can help to secure the future of your local parish church by setting up a regular donation. How much, or how little, is entirely in your gift to decide but each penny will help to make a difference. If you are unable to commit to a regular donation, each church has a box for one-off donations - just remember if you are a taxpayer to gift aid it, so we can claim the tax you have already paid back.

CHURCH LEGACY

A lasting gift to your church

You may also want to consider Legacy Giving - a gift to the church in your Will. We have a number of leaflets produced by the Church of England that give advice on the things to consider and even a leaflet for solicitors. You can specify what the legacy is to be used for if you so wish, or not - it is

entirely up to you. As the Bible says in Corinthians 9:7 "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

We all love a cheerful giver too, so if you feel in your heart that you want to support your parish church in either of these ways (or even both) to help us through these challenging times, please contact your Treasurer who will be happy to have a chat with you - in the strictest confidence - and provide you with the information you need **without any obligation whatsoever**. Leaflets are also available to pick up and take away to read at your leisure in each church.

Your Treasurers are:

Stapleton - Debra Walker 016977 48987

Bewcastle - Allison Roberts 016977 48311

Kirklington with Hethersgill - Carol Armstrong 01228 675534

In summary, we are fighting the effects of the pandemic to keep our churches viable so that we can all continue to celebrate each baptism, wedding and good lives lived well at funerals with our friends and neighbours in our communities.

Thank you so much for your continued support.