

February 2021 ----- **BENEFICE NEWS** ----- February 2021

For enquiries please contact Revd Dr Robert Brown

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

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Notices

Funerals:

Ann Miller, 89, of Crossgreen, Bewcastle, 12pm Thursday 21st January 2021, followed by cremation

Mary Phillips, 85, of Sleetbeck, 10.20am Tuesday 26th January 2021, Carlisle Crematorium

Sunday Services for February:

Due to the ongoing COVID lockdown, Sunday worship across the benefice continues to be suspended for the time being. We will continue to review the situation, but it is unlikely there will be any services in February. Our churches continue to remain open for private prayer (except Hethersgill).

This month sees the start of Lent. Unfortunately we will not be able to meet on Ash Wednesday, but I encourage you to join online services on Sunday and Ash Wednesday at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/church-online>

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

Weddings: maximum = 6. Weddings may take place in exceptional circumstances but are restricted to a maximum of **6** present – including the priest, bride, and groom.

Baptisms: maximum = church dependent (20-30). Baptisms (christenings) may take place and are now restricted to the maximum number a church can safely hold based on its COVID-19 risk assessment. Presently these are Bewcastle – 20; Stapleton – 30; Hethersgill – 20; Kirklington – 30. These numbers include the priest, church staff, parents, godparents and all children.

Prayer Resources. I have produced a series of 15-20 minute meditative Morning Prayer videos with a Celtic flavour that focusses on the life of St Cuthbert. Please do use these as and when you feel able. They can be used on any day. A number of people have come back to me saying they find them 'calm, peaceful', and 'a joy to listen to'. They are available on the Bewcastle House of Prayer Website (www.bewcastlehouseofprayer.org.uk), where this newsletter can also be viewed or downloaded.

Ready, steady, census

The decennial census is almost upon us.

Households throughout Cumbria will soon be asked to take part in the nationwide survey of housing and the population. It has been carried out every decade since 1801, with the exception of 1941.

Information from the digital-first census will help decide how services are planned and funded in your local area. This could mean things like doctors' surgeries, housing or new bus routes.

Households will receive a letter with a unique access code in the post, allowing them to complete their questionnaire online. Paper questionnaires will be available on request. Census day is March 21.

For more information, visit census.gov.uk.

if anyone is interested in part time work with the census please look at www.censusjobs.co.uk

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.

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. This Newsletter can also be downloaded from the following sites:

www.Bewcastle.com/news-events, www.BewcastleHouseOfPrayer.org.uk/parish-notice

Deadline for the March 2021 issue is 1pm on Saturday 21st February to Tricia Coombe, Damhead, Lyneholmeford, Roweltown, CA6 6LQ. 016977 48833 or triciacoombe@damhead.me

When news is grim and depressing and we have experienced enough already with the likelihood of more to come, we are in need of something positive and uplifting to hang on to. I am writing this while listening to sobering news from all over the world and our local weather outlook has joined in on the act in these dark January days by plotting the course of Storm Christoph whose particular speciality is floods and heading for the North of England.

February brings more promise – vaccinations are going apace – days are growing longer – we are looking forward to light. The month begins with Candlemas on the 2nd and Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent on the 17th. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple at Candlemas marks the end of the Christmas cycle and introduces two elderly characters, Simeon and Anna, the former who would not die until he had seen the Messiah and, when he held the child, referred to him as “a light that will be a revelation to the Gentiles”. A most precious light.

As we approach Lent, on the second Sunday before, which used to be known as Sexagesima we hear again the Christmas Gospel when St John recalls the words from Genesis, “In the beginning”. Then follows the account of the creation and the appearance of a light which would shine in the darkness and never be overcome.

This month our thoughts are drawn by the strengthening daylight, the clumps of snowdrops, the increasing activity of the natural world, to consider the gift of the Universe and the wonderful world of nature. When this pandemic retreats and when we take up where we left off, we will be going back into our ‘houses of prayer’ and singing favourite hymns, hoping that that rousing song of praise will continue its popularity. It is the hymn composed by a young Swedish preacher, Carl Gustav Boberg who, while walking home from Church, was caught in a violent thunderstorm. That afternoon of crashing thunder and lightning settled into an evening of clear sky and peacefulness – a contrast of awesome power taken over by the quiet gentleness which led him that evening to write the hymn we have come to know as “How great thou art”.

‘O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the works they hands have made
I see the stars – I hear the mighty thunder
Thy power throughout the Universe displayed”

On frosty nights when the sky is clear and we are free from light pollution it is possible to look out in imagination on the magnificence of the universe; the planets, the stars, the milky way and all that leads us to marvel and the wonders of the Universe.

Then let us turn our thoughts to that Light which would never dim promised by Simeon – the Christ the Redeemer who took children in his arms, who cured the leper and restored sight to the blind, making the lame walk and comforting the bereaved. Who will be there when we suffer loss and when the bottom drops out of our world.

A light which may flicker, but will never go out.