

*April 2021 ----- **BENEFICE NEWS** ----- April 2021*

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## **Notices**

### **Sunday Services for April:**

The national lockdown is still in place, but as most people will, by now, have had their first coronavirus vaccination, we will resume one service a fortnight in the benefice from Easter Day in line with ongoing quarantine requirements, and keep the situation under review.

**Easter Day Services Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> April 6 am Sunrise Service around the Bewcastle Cross  
10 am Holy Communion, St Mary's Stapleton**

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April, 10 am Morning Prayer, St Mary's Hethersgill**

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 10 am Morning Prayer, St Cuthbert's Bewcastle**

### **Our churches continue to remain open for private prayer (except Hethersgill).**

**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](http://www.bewcastlehouseofprayer.org.uk)), where this newsletter can also be viewed or downloaded.

**Annual Parochial Church Meetings.** Although we only had our annual meetings in September last year, we are required by law to have another round before the end of May. Government and Church of England restrictions on physical gatherings are still in place at the moment, and are unlikely to have been removed before these meetings. Nevertheless, with the numbers that usually attend we should be well within the risk assessment limits for gatherings in each of the churches.

**Notice is therefore given for Annual Parochial Church Meetings and Election of Church Wardens for each of our three parishes as follows:**

<b>St Cuthbert Bewcastle</b>	<b>7pm Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at Bewcastle Church</b>
<b>St Mary Stapleton</b>	<b>7pm Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at Stapleton Church</b>
<b>St Cuthbert Kirklington with St Mary Hethersgill</b>	<b>7pm Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at Kirklington Church.</b>

**Full statutory notices will be displayed on church websites and noticeboards where feasible.**

**Bewcastle Scouts** have continued to run through the pandemic but on line most of the time. They are hoping that face to face meetings will start again in April after Easter.

Contacts are : Simon Barrett 01228 497970 David Harding 07935172942 [bewcastlescouts@gmail.com](mailto:bewcastlescouts@gmail.com)

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](http://www.Bewcastle.com/news-events), [www.BewcastleHouseOfPrayer.org.uk/parish-notice](http://www.BewcastleHouseOfPrayer.org.uk/parish-notice)

Deadline for the May 2021 issue is 1pm on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April to Tricia Coombe, Damhead, Lyneholmford, Roweltown, CA6 6LQ. 016977 48833 or [triciacoombe@damhead.me](mailto:triciacoombe@damhead.me)

It's the funeral of a friend. A neighbouring farmer perhaps or someone local whom everybody knew and loved. Dick the Post has done yet another of his brilliant addresses, and like everyone else you are now waiting for the formalities to be concluded.

What might you be thinking? Well, memories of course. Maybe too the thought that one day YOU will be the one to whom people will have come to say farewell. But if you are anything like me, there will be deeper questions too.

Where is that person now? Is all well? Are they reunited with their loved ones? What (if anything) can they now see which as yet you can't? Can there really be a God to welcome that person Home – whatever luggage they bring?

Like execution, a funeral encourages us to think seriously. And of course there will be as many answers to those questions as there are people, for none of us can see round the corner. All we can do is to wait until our own turn comes.

In this letter I want to share a few of my own thoughts – gleaned over a lifetime – personal and professional. And I do so in no spirit of “Being Right”. Simply that for better or for worse sometimes it's good to share. (One poor beggar showing another beggar where perhaps bread may be found.)

So here goes.

For me, however hard I find it to put into words, I believe there is a God from whom we come, with whom in this life we travel and to whom one day we shall return. I believe too that our life here on earth is an adventure. A gift from God to make of it what we will. A journey where we are never alone, but can find help, guidance, companionship, strength, forgiveness and inspiration along the way.

Some find sufficient help for that journey within the circle of their family or friends. Within their place of work perhaps or the community in which they happen to live. It's just that for me this is not enough. I need to know that that same God whom I believe once made me and who one day will call me home, is also with me now as I travel through this world – sharing my journey, helping me on my way. Sometimes it will be that I find Him in the things around me. In the beauty and majesty of our natural world. Within the lives of family and friends who in their own unique way so often inspire and support me. I find Him in Holy Writ, in private prayer and in public worship. Perhaps surprisingly I find Him even in the brokenness and pain of our wounded world. But most especially (and I can only speak for myself) I find Him in the life and death and resurrection of His Son Jesus.

Over the years (too many now!) I have discovered that Our Lord has become for me a constant daily companion, sharing in all I do – for better or for worse. Strengthening, guiding, forgiving – always believing the best. Saying as it were “This is the way. Follow it and let me help you.”

Clumsily put. A bit naïve too maybe. But for me, enough. Enough to say that because I believe God is our Friend and Guide in this Life, I am convinced that when I come to die, He will be there too, welcoming me home – whatever luggage I may bring.

Someone once said “When we wave goodbye to a ship and watch her move out of the harbour and over the horizon, always remember there will be hands to greet her on the other side”. And that's exactly how I have come to think of death. That moment when this life is complete, we shall be welcomed home by someone (as yet unseen) who already knows and loves us and will be pleased to see us.

“Journey's end. Lover's meeting”.

It's as if from birth to death with all my ups and downs, faults and failings, I travel with a tag “Known to God”. And into those hands I am content to entrust myself.

This letter has been too long. Forgive me. So let me compound my “wickedness” and the kindness of our editor by sharing what for me is the greatest of all prayers – occasionally used at a funeral. It is by John Donne and goes like this.

“Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of Heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house, where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light; no noise nor silence, no fears, no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity; in the habitation of thy glory and dominion, world without end. Amen.”

Some people know exactly how to put it!

With my love and prayers,

Bishop John