

ST. NICHOLAS, NEWPORT, LINCOLN, LN1 3DP
Registered Charity Number: 1133977
www.stnicholaslincoln.org.uk
4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER
3rd May 2020

FROM THE VICAR

I was struck when opening my Church Times on Friday by a headline referring to the '40 days and 40 nights' of lockdown that we have so far experienced. These words make a link between Our Lord's temptation in the wilderness and our present time of isolation. Both, in turn, echo a far older narrative, that of the forty years spent by the people of Israel in the wilderness between their deliverance from Egypt and their arrival in the Promised Land.

These are 'in between' times. For Jesus, the forty days and forty nights in the wilderness came immediately after the ecstatic revelation of his Baptism and just before the beginning of his public ministry. For the people of Israel, the forty years of wandering came immediately after a miraculous work of God in setting them free from slavery and just before their entry into the 'land flowing with milk and honey'.

And for us?

Usually we reflect at length on these themes in the season of Lent, in itself an 'in between' time in which we turn our eyes from the Bethlehem stable towards the cross of Golgotha and what lies beyond it. But this year there is a sense in which our wilderness journey has been extended. Although we have celebrated Easter, and we continue to do so during the Easter season, there is still a Lenten feel to everything. It is, as St Ignatius might have said, a time of desolation.

Such times are part of what another great Christian writer called 'The Normal Christian Life'. No Christian spends the entirety of their journey in ecstatic bliss. There is no connection, either, between how 'good' a Christian someone is and how much time they may have to spend in the wilderness.

It has been our calling to live through this particular wilderness time, CoVid time. As usual, we find ourselves spending a lot of our prayers on requests for this to stop. 'Let us go back to Egypt', the people of Israel said to Moses. 'Take this cup away from me', said Jesus to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane. 'Make this wretched virus end', we pray day in, day out, week in, week out.

Again, it is not an indication that our prayers are at fault if what we ask for is not exactly what we receive. We are not necessarily wrong to ask, nor are we perforce at fault in how we are asking. God is not bound to do what we want. We, however, are bound to keep on asking.

One of my roles is to teach Masters' students at BGU, and one of the questions that we often debate is why a good God allows bad things to happen. It's a philosopher's question, and one that has generated a vast literature of speculation, argument and imaginative engagement.

It may be, though, that of all the possible questions 'why' is the least helpful – it is certainly the least answerable. Instead, it is often more helpful to ask *how* we are to live as faithful Christians during the wilderness times, or *what* God might be asking us to do in response, or *where* the opportunities to be creative in our loving service of God and one another, or *who* in our midst needs a kind word or a helping hand.

There is a paradox in our 'Lenten' Easter this year, a sense that the risen Christ has indeed returned to us having conquered sin and death, and yet a sense also that our fullest celebration of His victory must wait a little longer. What will sustain us best as we wait in isolation will be to keep ourselves relentlessly focused on Jesus, who endured the wilderness, and the garden, and the cross for our sake, and who triumphed over them all.

May God bless you all,

Hugh

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS SUNDAY

Acts 2:42-end

Psalms 23

1 Peter 2:19-end

John 10:1-10

PARISH INFORMATION

Vicar: Rev'd Dr Hugh Jones

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Notices for next week's sheet by Wednesday please.

Online & Social Media

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www.stnicholaslincoln.org.uk

NOTICES

DEREK DRAPER

Those who remember Derek and Sallie Draper will be sad to hear that Derek has died. Please keep Sallie and her family in your prayers in the coming days, and especially on 5th May when Derek's funeral service will take place. Look out for news of a Memorial Service that a larger number of people can attend once things return to something more like normality.

COOP COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

St Nicholas' Church is a Coop Community Champion – Ermine East – until June 6th – donations shared among champions every time you use your dividend card there.

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK: 10-16 MAY

This year Christian Aid is focusing on support for Coronavirus prevention and treatment, and on building earth dams in drought-stricken Kenya. Earth dams are huge basins dug in the ground to collect and store what rain water there is. They are simple, low cost and effective in countering the erratic rainfall resulting from climate change.

Unfortunately current restrictions mean that we are unable to distribute envelopes or organise collections this year, so we encourage people to donate directly to Christian Aid this year. You can do this online at:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk>

or by phone by ringing: 0845 700 0300

Thank you.

CHURCH COLLECTIONS

Whilst the church remains closed, most of the bills continue to roll in. If your regular giving is by cash in the collection plate or by weekly or monthly envelopes, please continue to put your donations on one side ready to bring when we finally reopen. Every penny will be needed. Thank you! *Sandra Grattrick & Joan Beresford*

NEW WEBSITE!

Our website has had a facelift! Visit <https://www.stnicholaslincoln.org.uk/> to have a look. Links to our e-Church videos and this Weekly Sheet are available on the new site. Arthur Makin, who has been our Webmaster for as long as we have had a website, is now stepping back from this responsibility. We are so grateful to Arthur for all his hard work. Please address further queries about the website to the Parish Office from now on. We are also very grateful indeed to Gareth and Fiona, who have done the lion's share of the technical and design work required to set up the new site.

FACEBOOK CHAT GROUP

A chat group has been established associated with our St Nicholas Facebook page. Many of you have already joined the group and are enjoying the

fellowship that it represents. If you would like to join go to

www.facebook.com/groups/257796276462083

Do get in touch if you need help.

ORDINATIONS!

It now seems unlikely that the ordinations that were planned for July will be able to go ahead. We will inform you of new dates as soon as we have them. If you would like to contribute to collections for gifts for Alice and Jon upon their ordinations as Priest and Deacon, as is our established custom at St Nicholas, please get in touch.

CHURCHES TOGETHER

GREATER LINCOLN ACTIVE FAITH NETWORK

With the e-Church bulletin this week is an update from the Greater Lincoln Active Faith Network's Co-Vid response team. This provides useful information about what is already underway across the city. It also gives details about the kinds of support that those who are able to volunteer can offer. Please note that this is an updated list from the one circulated last week and use this one instead.

HAVING A CLEAR OUT?

Tools with a Mission seek tools, sewing/knitting machines and fabric, for well-organised livelihood-creation groups.

The Leprosy Mission seek postage stamps, holiday postcards, foreign coins, tea/cigarette cards and any 'small collectable' to sell to raise money for early diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and employment training.

If you can help, please contact registered collector Pauline Organ (pauline-organ2@hotmail.co.uk; 01427 788629) who will arrange collection when restrictions are lifted.

LINCOLN CLIMATE COMMISSION

Do you have a vision and passion for a vibrant, resilient, equitable and genuinely sustainable Lincoln & district? At the Lincoln Climate Commission we are looking for volunteer members who can help drive forward that vision in a practical way. Can you help us find suitable people? Could it be you? We want people from the voluntary sector, public sector and private sector. For more information please see <https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/.../climate-change-zero-carbon-lin...>

See also "Leeds Climate commission" who are helping us to follow their example.