

ST. NICHOLAS, NEWPORT, LINCOLN, LN1 3DP
Registered Charity Number: 1133977
www.stnicholaslincoln.org.uk
5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER
10th May 2020

FROM THE VICAR

The Coronavirus lockdown has prompted a great deal of reflection in the Church, and not a little disagreement. At the heart of this reflection and disagreement there is one comparatively simple little question: does it matter that we cannot meet together in our church buildings?

The answer to that question is, in my view, yes. It matters, and it matters quite a lot. What we are able to do online and on the phone is important and valuable. Some of it at least will continue beyond the end of the lockdown, its worth now well-established. But that does not mean that we can dispense with meeting together in the church building altogether, even when the crisis has passed. As a number of you have been asking me about this in the last week or so, I feel I should explain a little more about why I think this is so.

The most important reason is that I do not believe that the Christian life, whether in the worship of God or God's mission in the world in which we share, can be entirely reduced to the *cognitive*. Cognition has to do with the things that go on in our minds – our perceptions, our beliefs, our thoughts, our reflections, our intentions and so on. All of these things are quite easy to transfer out of the church building and onto the internet. We can see each other, speak to each other, show each other work that we have prepared earlier. We can even sing. Information technology can help with these things because they are all able to be reduced to information.

But the same is not true of a great deal that is important to the Christian way of life. We consecrate buildings for Christian worship not because we believe that God is any more present there than anywhere else, but because by setting aside a special place for that purpose and only that purpose we underline the importance that we place on worship and we help ourselves to focus on that worship into the bargain. To say that we can worship God anywhere and not just in church is true, but in the same way (I think) as it is true to say that we can cut our grass with a pair of scissors. Using objects and elements set aside for divine worship, and doing it in a building set aside for divine worship, is not a way of saying that God is limited by or contained within those objects and

elements and spaces. It is, rather, both an integral part of our worship and a precious aid to our prayers.

The Christian faith is not one in which physical, bodily things do not matter, nor one in which they are seen as inferior to spiritual things. God in Christ becomes bodily present in the world, in the historical Jesus and in the Eucharist. God in Christ rose again to bodily life, returning from the grave to offer us a share in his eternal life.

And our bodies matter, too. The Bible tells us that they are 'temples of the Holy Spirit' – not our minds, note, but our bodies. Collectively we are not the 'mind of Christ' but the 'body of Christ'. We are called to be a people in whom God is physically present in the world. *That* is what it means to be the Church.

So it follows, I think, that gathering together physically in a place that has been set aside and designed for the worship of God really does matter. For as long as we cannot, I will continue to grieve the loss. What we are able to do now is not by any means nothing, but it does not take the place of what we have lost, nor should we pretend or imagine that it can.

In the next few weeks and months we expect a gradual return to the church building to be permitted. I will keep you posted on that as best I am able. In the meantime, I for one will be longing for it, praying for it, looking forward to it. I hope you will too.

May God bless you all,

Hugh

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS SUNDAY

Acts 7:55-end
Psalm 31:1-5
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

PARISH INFORMATION

Vicar: Rev'd Dr Hugh Jones

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Parish Office

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Notices for next week's sheet by Wednesday please.

Online & Social Media

🐦 @StNicksLincoln 📘 @stnicholaslincoln

www.stnicholaslincoln.org.uk

NOTICES

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.