

NEWSLETTER 25TH JUNE 2020

Worship in Church

We have now had two services of public worship, one in the Rev John Smith's garden in Oppède on the 14th June where 10 gathered together and one in All Saints' Church in Marseille where 14 gathered. Celebration at being allowed to gather again for worship was muted, however, as we are not "back to normal" yet and somehow it isn't the same wearing masks and being so far apart. But it is a start and one on which we can build. Grateful thanks are due to all who have helped get things ready for these services, cleaning and stewarding in particular.

Here's the service at Oppède.



All Saints ready to go!

We are mindful that not everyone is out and about fully yet and, for those who are still isolating to an extent to protect themselves or loved ones, we are continuing with our Zoom services. We are celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday mornings at 11.30 am and Compline at 10 pm (French time – an hour earlier for our friends in the UK.) So don't worry if you are concerned about coming to church – please carry on joining our international congregation online!

It is unlikely that we will be resuming services in Aix until the Autumn but, in the meantime, we can arrange home communion for those who would like it – please contact Jamie our Chaplain on anglican.marseille@gmail.com

Choir practice

We have been contacted by the Choeur Sainte Victoire in Marseille who are looking for somewhere to practise in, and providing all is well regarding Covid restrictions being eased by then, they will be using All Saints from the middle of September, once a week. There are 35 in the choir so they should fill the church with song!

Prayers

If you need prayers for yourself or anyone you know please let our Chaplain Jamie know at anglican.marseille@gmail.com . We can all do with a little help at the moment!

Finance

Without the regular giving at services, our income has dropped and a big thankyou is due to all those who have generously and thoughtfully either continued to give via their banks, or have set up new standing orders. But there's room for more – so please let our Warden Jane know if you are able to give by cheque or standing order at the bank and she'll be happy to help. Without this funding our Chaplaincy can't exist and it has proved to be a lifeline to many of us through this difficult time, with the online services and pastoral care provided by Jamie and his ministry team. Oddly, we now have access to 8 services a month rather than 1 for many of us, so the Chaplaincy is proving good value!

Thought for the Week – from Brian Draper, from a series of reflections commissioned by St Paul's Cathedral on where God is in this crisis of Covid 19.

“ Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes – including you.”
writes Anne Lamott.

That's not to be flippant, in a pandemic; but her words remind me that, far from finding lock-down restful, it's been hard to unplug mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and I expect it has for you.

And so, as the restrictions ease, let's not assume we should be automatically primed for action. The Bible speaks of finding “rest for the soul” for good reason, and thankfully the summer offers restorative opportunities, even if we can't go on holiday.

The trick, I've found, is to keep it simple. On the summer retreats I lead, we take a few steps barefoot, for example, to feel the grass beneath our feet. It can earth us, in a most heavenly way. Often, this evokes childhood memories too; as if the child in us knew, all along, that *here* we stand on holy ground.

Summer touches the soul through the senses, doesn't it? The Victorian nature writer Richard Jeffries describes a saunter which, for him, became spiritually immersive: 'the grasshoppers called and leaped, the greenfinches sang, the blackbirds happily fluted, all the air hummed with life. I was plunged deep in existence,' he writes, 'and with all that existence I prayed.'

How wonderful! At a time when we still can't quite get into church, he reminds me that Creation offers a uniquely worshipful space with all God's creatures, of which, and with which, we're one.

It takes courage to permit one's self to be at ease; though the psalmist urges us too: 'Be still and know that I am God.' Not that rest for the soul means everlasting idleness of course. I led a retreat for St Paul's a couple of years ago, and we spent time in Green Park, one of London's most verdant spaces. I encouraged us, in the spirit of Psalm 23, to lie down in its green pastures, to 'be'. In our group was an exhausted psychotherapist who'd been working with children in war-torn areas.... he reported that for him, these few minutes of taking rest in God's creation are what energised him most fully for the work that lay ahead. We are restored no doubt, for good reason.

Try one of these, this week:

- Take a few steps on grass with bare feet. Savour the sensation. Find restoration in the physical touch which reaches to the soul.
- Spend a few minutes contemplating one specific part of nature – a blade of grass, a stretch of water, a flower.... Let nature teach you stillness.
- Lie down if you can on the grass. Give yourself permission to be at ease for a few minutes every day.
- Take your Bible outside and read Psalm 23. Meditate on what it means for your soul to be restored.

Jane has now taken over editing the Newsletter and would be grateful for contributions.