

# July

Readings and collects for Sunday.  
Please see inside for reflections.

## Sunday 5th 4<sup>TH</sup> AFTER TRINITY

*Zechariah 9:9-12, Romans 7:15-25a, Matthew 11:16-19, 25-end*

### COLLECT:

*Gracious Father,  
by the obedience of Jesus  
you brought salvation to our wayward world:  
draw us into harmony with your will,  
that we may find all things restored in him,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

## Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> 5<sup>TH</sup> AFTER TRINITY

*Isaiah 55:10-13, Romans 8:1-11, Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23*

### COLLECT:

*Almighty God,  
send down upon your Church the riches of your Spirit,  
and kindle in all who minister the gospel  
your countless gifts of grace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

## Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>TH</sup> AFTER TRINITY

*Isaiah 44:6-8, Romans 8:12-25, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43*

### COLLECT:

*Creator God,  
you made us all in your image:  
may we discern you in all that we see,  
and serve you in all that we do;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

## Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>TH</sup> AFTER TRINITY

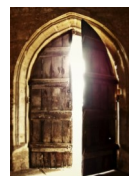
*1 Kings 3:5-12, Romans 8:26-end, Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52*

### COLLECT:

*Generous God,  
you give us gifts and make them grow:  
though our faith is small as mustard seed,  
make it grow to your glory  
and the flourishing of your kingdom;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

## FROM THE VICAR

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer....* Acts 2:42-47



Many people are trying to imagine what life can and will look like as lockdown restrictions are lifted. As churches we're asking questions about what it will be possible to do in our buildings and beyond them given that there will be some constraints on activities for months to come. What is *permissible* is not always the same as what is *possible*; what is possible is not necessarily the most *prudent* thing to do.

We've had to make some adjustments in recent months to new ways of being church and expressing faith. How have we coped? I have been delighted to see how many people have joined in our online worship and other activities and been bold enough to embrace new technologies. There has been a sense of loss too as we have been unable to gather and see one another face to face and worship in buildings that are familiar and hold special memories for us.

In recent days I have been reflecting how I am inclined to speak about church being more than Sundays and services, yet during lockdown I have wondered to what extent that is really as true as I had hoped. Has church and faith ceased to exist for us because of our inability to gather in a building and if so, what does that say about our understanding of church and faith?

I am pleased that we've still been able to be active in nurturing our own faith, focus on pastoral care, consider evangelism in new ways, etc. There hasn't been a shortage of ministry taking place but it has looked different.

As a Church need to learn important lessons from this time so that we don't just revert back to life focused around services. What does the church exist for, what shape does our worship and discipleship take, how can we be church beyond our buildings? How can we find a way of expressing faith and being active in mission in a brave new world?

The early church had to deal with similar questions and it grew at great speed without the benefit (or burden) of buildings like ours. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and with a shared devotion to the things that matter, a fledgling church changed the world by demonstrating and sharing the good news of Jesus. That has always been our calling—perhaps this time has helped us to see it more clearly.

KB

## Reflections in July...

### Sunday 5th July

*Zech 9:9-12, Romans 7:15-25a, Matt 18:16-19, 25-end*

We have an innate desire to see justice done; sometimes regardless of what that truly means. There's a local community group on social media which is usually positive for bringing people together and sharing information. Unfortunately, there's also a less helpful element to this forum with, at times, even the mildest wrongdoers publicly shamed.

Make no mistake, God detests sin. A Hebrew word for sin, "hata", means "to go astray". Following The Fall described in Genesis chapter 3, people drifted far astray from God and often didn't know or chose not to admit how much their actions veered from his standards. God gave his Law to reveal just how far humanity had strayed. No one could obey it to the letter except for Jesus. His perfect sacrifice on the cross bridges our gap to the Father; bringing us into relationship with God – not by working our way to him with good deeds but through faith in Jesus and turning away from sin.

Despite our salvation being an instant gift, "sanctification" (living in purity and holiness) is a work in progress. Paul reflects this in the Roman's passage, talking about the struggle with the "sin that dwells within" – a parasite, if you like, that's contrary to the new nature and the Spirit we were given when we came to Christ. Even though we are free from condemnation, we still sin so need to regularly confess and seek forgiveness.

How does this affect our approach to enacting justice? Clearly some things are serious enough to need to be dealt with swiftly, without compromise. However, the passages from Matthew's Gospel give two examples of discipline. Chapter 18, verses 16 to 19 instructs on leaders disciplining someone sinning within their church – they are given three chances to correct their behaviour. If they do not, then they should be removed from the community. Later, in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, a king cancels his servant's debt and lets him go free. However, when he later learns that the servant did not extend that same forgiveness to someone who owed him money, the king restored the debt owed and put the servant into prison.

Enacting discipline and justice is important, but let's approach it with the mercy that our Lord Jesus both taught and perfectly modelled, and the awareness that we can all get it wrong at times.

**MS**

### Sunday 12th July

*Isaiah 55:10-13, Romans 8:1-11, Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23*

In our 'churchy' conversations there is sometimes a tendency to separate things into categories; we separate 'worship' from the time of fellowship with a cuppa, spiritual gifts from practical ones, opening prayer from the business of the meeting, and so forth. The Gnostics were guilty of a heresy that declares that people are divine souls trapped in a material body and world; the body and physical things were seen as evil.

Paul avoids such a distinction when he writes to the church in Roman and shows that the whole of life can be lived in a way that is honouring to God. The physical and practical and every day can become 'spiritual' and Spirit imbued; the church cleaning and coffee times can be an expression of worship—all things can be 'redeemed' and made holy if we act in obedience to God. Likewise even 'spiritual' things can be tainted if they are merely a front for hostility to God.

Paul exhorts us to set our minds on the things of the Spirit, that all things and every area of our lives might resonate with the Spirit's power and life.

**KB**

### Sunday 19th July

*Isaiah 44:6-8, Romans 8:12-25, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43*

I came to faith eight years ago. My first few months as a Christian were like a honeymoon. Many old friends told me that I seemed far more peaceful, content and secure. One in particular was moved by the changes I exhibited and wanted what I had, at least on a superficial level. Not knowing better, I probably fed him "the prosperity gospel" – come to Jesus and he'll take away your problems and make you happy.

He started attending church but his engagement with faith quickly faded once life's problems kicked in and once he realised he wouldn't necessarily suddenly gain lots of friends, wealth and female admirers!

Much of my understanding of God was immature at that time so I communicated some incorrect teachings to my friend, along with a genuine call for personal repentance, faith in Jesus and the meaning of the cross. These messages were mixed, to say the least.

We see in the Parable of the Weeds the imagery of good and bad seed– the Gospel being the good seed sown by Jesus and the bad seed being the lies and deception opposing our faith. Perhaps some of both were sown with my friend.

This parable would've had special resonance to the contemporary audience as it was common for rival farmers to sow bearded darnel into wheat to corrupt it. Servants were instructed to let them grow together. As they appeared quite similar, farmers would've been concerned that good wheat would've been removed along with the dangerous darnel. Therefore, it was left for skilled harvesters to separate the two later.

Back in 2012, my friend and I displayed similar enthusiasm for Jesus but also similar unwise, spiritually destructive perspectives. We both had to be given room to grow without being ostracised. My faith maintained and matured through trials and suffering. He walked away when Christianity did not meet his distorted expectations.

He remains a friend to this day and I'm convinced that the good seed will eventually grow in good soil, that his perspective will become eternal rather than temporal and that he will live by the life giving Spirit of God rather than being deceived and distracted by the desires of the flesh. That he will live by faith, not feelings. That he will know the precious love of Jesus and leave behind that idols that draw him away from God.

Please pray for him.

**MS**

# Pause, Ponder...

## THREE IN ONE

I hold a sacred image within my mind  
Revealing face of God,  
And in seeing I believe,  
I look again at unchanged frame,  
And this time name the Holy Spirit  
And gladly I receive,  
Then from behind my senses  
I bring the Son upon his Cross of pain  
Praying your will be done,  
But only slowly I perceive  
Interchanging images that run  
Through my brain,  
Are but three realities inside one.

PAT BIDMEAD

## Pray

Loving God,  
thank you for the blessings of my life,  
for the gift of love and the companionship  
and support of family and friends.  
Today, enable me to notice and give thanks  
for the things I usually take for granted;  
help me to grow in gratitude.

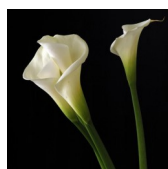
O my God, teach my heart  
where and how to seek You,  
where and how to find You.  
You are my God and You are my all  
and I have never seen You.  
You have made me and remade me,  
You have bestowed on me all the good  
things I possess,  
Still I do not know You.

I have not yet done that for which I was  
made.

Teach me to seek You.  
I cannot seek You unless You teach me  
or find You unless You show Yourself to me.

Let me seek You in my desire,  
let me desire You in my seeking.  
Let me find You by loving You,  
let me love You when I find You.

(Prayer of St Anselm of Canterbury)



## ANNOUNCEMENT

It's with sadness that we announce the death of Jane Tearnan, member of St Nicolas Church. Jane died on the evening of Sunday 28th June.  
Please remember Jane's family and friends in your prayers.

## CHURCH OPENING

The opening of church buildings for private prayer and public worship is now permitted. Nevertheless it is hard make possible given the number of restrictions in place, the necessary risk assessments and hygiene criteria with which we need to comply plus the 'suspension' of many of our volunteers due to the vulnerabilities of age or pre-existing health conditions. Staff members and PCCs have significant amounts of time discussing this matter in recent days to try and find a way to offer something to the congregations of both churches without it becoming too burdensome or complicated given that many of our office holders are not able to undertake their normal roles.



The church buildings will be open as follows in the coming weeks:

**Thursday 2nd July**, 10am-12noon: **St Nicolas** will be open for private prayer. You are asked to visit for no longer than 15 minutes. There will be no access to toilets and only 10 people will be permitted into the building at a time so you may be asked to wait a short while on arrival. Please come to the west door and follow the guidelines.

**Thursday 9th July**, 10am-12noon: **St Nicolas** will be open for private prayer as above.

**Sunday 12th July**, 10am: **St Nicolas** will be open for a short act of public worship. This will also be live streamed on Facebook so that you can join in at home. Numbers will be limited to 30 in the building and social distancing regulations will apply.

**Sunday 12th July**, 3-3.45pm: **St James** will be open for private prayer. You are asked to visit for no longer than 15 minutes. There will be no access to toilets and only 10 people will be permitted into the building at a time so you may be asked to wait a short while on arrival. Please enter through the north door and leave through the tower door.

In all instances you are asked to abide by these guidelines:

- 1) sanitise your hands before entering the building—supplies provided;
- 2) sign in with your name and contact details that we can use if we need to contact you;
- 3) use only the designated seating;
- 4) remain within the central area of the church;
- 5) other than the chair/pew you sit on please avoid touching anything else;
- 6) maintain social distancing (2 metres) for everyone other than those members of your household;
- 7) ask if anything is unclear or if you need assistance;

After these times we will pause for review before making decisions about what we can offer later in July and beyond. In the meantime if you have any questions about these opening times please do email Kelly: revkells@maill.com

Pease be patient as we try to navigate new territory; even opening to this extent has taken a huge amount of planning and effort.





## Book Review



### *The one about...*

#### **8 more stories about God in our everyday**

Mark Greene (LICC Publishing,

This is, as the name suggests, the second book in this series, giving eight short stories by people about how people's faith affects their everyday life. It's purpose is to encourage us, as it says on the back cover "There is no such thing as an ordinary day for a Christian. The book helps to open our eyes to see how God has been working in our lives, helps us to read our experience through biblical lenses and encourages us to tell other people about the wondrous things God has done in and through us."

Available through Licc, £3 each or four for £9  
[licc.org.uk/shop](http://licc.org.uk/shop)

**Reviewed by Janet Flavel**



The Foodbank is still in need of your support during this time. You can find up to date information about food needs from the website and

can also make financial donations there too:

[www.nuneaton.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.nuneaton.foodbank.org.uk)

The current shopping list comprises: **instant mashed potato; tinned potatoes; tinned carrots; sponge puddings; pot noodles; small jars of coffee.**

### **PASTORAL CARE**

We have a network of pastoral care and support for this time when we are unable to meet. if you are concerned about anyone or if you would value being contacted. If you find yourself in need of supplies or help please get in touch.



### **GIVING**

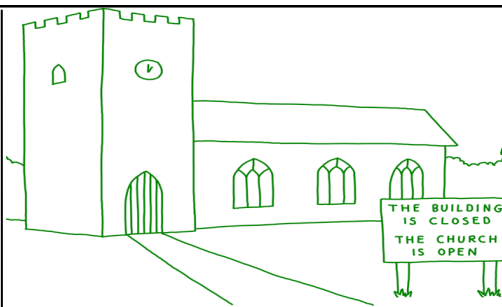
During this time when we cannot gather for worship it is still vital that we support our churches financially if they are to survive. Please consider how you can maintain your support of church mission and ministry at this time. If you are able to give via standing order or bank transfer please get in touch.

Daily Hope is a free phone line, available 24 hours a day, offering music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone.



### **SAINTS NUNEATON**

If you would like to volunteer to give some time to SAINTS we are looking for people to act as welcomers, people willing to chat to guests and also people to help with cleaning and basic maintenance. Please let Kelly know if you're interested.



## **CHURCH BEYOND BUILDINGS**

Below is our programme of online activities.

### **Sundays 10am - SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE**

On Facebook at 10am.

<https://www.facebook.com/stnicolaschurchnuneaton/>

### **Sundays 11am-12noon - CHURCH LOUNGE**

Post-service chat via Zoom.

<https://zoom.us/j/136028810>

### **Mondays 8am - MORNING PRAYER** on Zoom.

Zoom link is <https://zoom.us/j/136028810>

**Tuesdays 10am - SWANS** session with Sally-Ann live streamed on Facebook.

### **Wednesdays 7-8pm - WORD & WORSHIP**

Online Bible study and chatter.

<https://zoom.us/j/136028810>

### **Thursdays 11.30am - SONGS FOR LITTLE ONES**

Linked with Baby Hub Sally-Ann will be leading a short session of songs.

### **Thursdays 7.30pm- TALKING JESUS**

A course providing encouragement and advice on sharing our faith. It is suitable for those of all knowledge and experience levels.

### **Fridays 11am - SNAPS**

A musical programme for people special needs.

Email Sally-Ann [saveasey@postmaster.co.uk](mailto:saveasey@postmaster.co.uk)

### **Saturdays 4-5pm - CHURCH QUIZ**

A quiz suitable for all ages via Zoom.

Plus **NIGHT PRAYER** every evening at 8.30pm on Facebook.

### **DEADLINES**

The deadline for the July newsletter is Monday 20th July. Please email contributions to Kelly. We'd especially like church members to contribute personal news, poems, book reviews, prayers and information for the newsletter.

Please also give your feedback and whether you would be happy with a joint monthly newsletter for St Nicolas and St James going forward; up until the start of lockdown each church did it's own thing!

**NB: Kelly will be on annual leave from Monday 13th to Saturday 18th July.**

### **STAYING IN TOUCH**

**Website:** [www.stnicolaschurch.org.uk](http://www.stnicolaschurch.org.uk)

**Facebook:** [stnicolaschurchnuneaton](https://www.facebook.com/stnicolaschurchnuneaton)

**Email:** [office@stnicolaschurch.org.uk](mailto:office@stnicolaschurch.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 02476344553 or 02476346900

**Post:** St Nicolas Church, Parish Office, Vicarage Street, Nuneaton, CV11 4AZ