

June 21st

Dear Friends

This week saw some children returning to school and the opening of some non essential shops. Whilst for some of us, this may not have been of any concern, there are many for whom these events will have been met with mixed emotions. We all take decisions daily based on our perception of risk and for each of us this will be different. However we feel about these things, please continue to pray for all those families with children returning to school and for all venturing out to the shops and especially for all those who worked hard to ensure the safest possible reopening.

We were reminded by Bishop Pete's letter this week that re openings, whether schools, shops or places of worship, are only permissions, not requirements. So although there could be a date from which places of worship **may** open, it does not mean they **must**. The PCC will be eventually have to make such a decision so please continue to pray for them to exercise grace, wisdom and discernment .

Angela was thinking about the coming weekend and wrote the following:

It's Father's Day on Sunday, not a day celebrated in the Christian lectionary, but now an accepted part of our yearly calendar, and a day to say 'thank you' to our Dads for their love and support.

But what of Joseph, Jesus' 'other Dad'? He did the right thing - after a bit of prompting by an angel, married his pregnant girlfriend, then trekked her over 90 miles to his home town for a census, and to give birth, before fleeing into Egypt (about 40 miles from Bethlehem to the nearest bit of Egyptian territory). A couple of years later, when it was safe, the three of them returned to Nazareth. The next mention of Joseph is in Luke 2: 41 - 51, when Jesus was 12 and his parents took him to Jerusalem for the Passover. Subsequently, unlike Mary, Joseph disappears from the Bible completely.

Throughout Christianity, Jesus' mother, Mary is revered and adored; depicted in statues, paintings and icons, and held up as the perfect example of obedience, chastity and motherhood to which all women should aspire. Joseph, on the other hand, is mainly seen as the guy who leads the donkey on stage in the nativity play, and stands there, looking on, as the rest of the story unfolds.

But, just as Mary was chosen by God to bear his Son, we forget that Joseph also had to have all the right credentials to fulfil the Old Testament prophecies. He was a God fearing man of integrity and 'faithful to law', so he wasn't going to ignore an angel's message in a dream; but more importantly, he was a descendant of King David - and the Messiah would have to have the same lineage, as prophesied by Isaiah. When the census was decreed, Joseph's home town was Bethlehem, David's birthplace, where Micah had also prophesied the Messiah would 'spring from'.

God had to choose Jesus' 'other Dad' just as carefully as he chose his mother; a man with the right genealogy, a man of faith, and with all the attributes to enable Jesus to grow 'in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and Man' (Luke 2: 52).

So , happy Father's Day, not only to our Dads, but to Joseph, and all the 'other Dads'; those men of faith and integrity who, by their example and teaching, enable generations of children to grow up, learning about, and learning to love, Jesus for themselves.

It is wonderful how often thoughts grow from the simplest of words or sentences. One such instance from Liz came from daily bible reading notes

This morning's bible reading was Psalm 104. The subtitle in my bible said "The Lord takes care of his creation" As we sit in the midst of a destructive global pandemic this made me think. Whilst I don't believe that this pandemic has been sent by God to punish us, I do think that this enforced period of lockdown has made many of us question our behaviour in relation to God's creation. We read that global lockdown has had a massive impact on air pollution because of the reduction in road and air traffic, trends which have been observed throughout the world. In Venice, the water in the canals has cleared because of the reduction in boat traffic. Deaths as a result of air pollution have fallen dramatically and the forecast is that 2020 will see the largest ever percentage drop in CO2 emissions. But have we learnt or will we learn lessons from this?

Since lockdown non recyclable waste has increased. There has been an increase in the consumption of take away food and packaged convenience foods. Food retailers have gone back to using plastic bags over fears about the re use of paper bags. Environmental protection works have been suspended. All together the impact of this may very well cancel out the reductions in other areas.

However, we may now begin to develop a better understanding of the mechanics of environmental stability. We have had an opportunity to look again at our part in creation. What lessons might we learn, as individuals, as a nation or globally? We were due to have a sermon series in June on the subject of climate change, is this our God given opportunity to think again and begin to show better care for God's creation?

On Tuesday we had a thunderstorm and more are forecast this week .Below are two images of the lightning from Tuesday night.



As a child I remember being very afraid of thunderstorms, perhaps it was the noise or the violent flashes of light, I don't really remember. Now having a little more understanding, they serve as a powerful reminder to me of the glory and power of God as revealed in nature. Far from being afraid it brings peace and assurance that even in the midst of a storm (or a global pandemic) God is with us.

***"He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."* Deuteronomy 31:8**

Have a good week. Stay safe and take care

With love

Angela and Liz

P.S Amy has sent us the following news which arrived this evening:

***Today I was listening to the birds in my garden. We have a pair of magpies and they have four babies. The babies are so loud and raucous. Also, I have enjoyed planting some plants that I have grown from seed. We have got French climbing beans and also some runner beans. We also have teasels, foxgloves and aquilegia and viburnum dawn. We chose viburnum dawn because Lionel had one in his garden when he lived in Green Oak Grove and also because it flowers around my birthday month which is in November. Take care and stay safe everyone and God Bless
From Amy.***