

St Nicholas, Marston and St Thomas of Canterbury, Elsfield

MARSTON & ELSFIELD MESSENGER

June 2020 ~ a church newsletter during lockdown

Dear Friends,

I put pen to paper at the end of May, aware that our situation will have changed again by June. What will remain the same, however, is our waiting and perhaps that sense of being left behind in the big decision-making. Should we stay at home or venture out? Shop locally or continue to order online? Jump in the car or get on the bike? Get a professional haircut or improvise with clippers? And these decisions don't even begin to touch on our worship life. When will we be able to return to church? Will there be gatherings for sung worship in 2020?

I am currently reflecting on Ascension Day, a feast that celebrates the point when Jesus left this earth and ascended to God in heaven. All his post-resurrection appearances are drawn to a close and the loose ends, about what happens to his resurrected body, neatly tied up.

Easy to follow, right? We might do well to reflect on the angel's question to the disciples in Acts: "Why do you stand looking up towards heaven?" The implication, as I understand it, is that there's not much point looking up to heaven to try to understand God. Because the big reveal of the Ascension is that the glorified Jesus



doesn't leave humanity behind. He takes us, all of us, with him.

Soon after Ascension Day, we begin to wait again; we wait for Pentecost. For the first disciples this period of waiting was a time of uncertainty; they didn't know how long it would last, or how it would end, rather like the situation we're currently facing about worshiping in our buildings. However, when Pentecost comes, something marvellous happens. There is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which has enormous implications for the mission of the Church. God was doing something radically new. This was the beginning of a new creation: the climax of salvation accomplished in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit was sent for all people: not just the twelve disciples, but for us today, as we carry out the mission of the church, in our daily lives at home, work, school and everywhere. We don't need to look up to heaven because God is within us.

After Pentecost comes Trinity Sunday, reminding us that the ascended Jesus is one with God the Almighty in Heaven and the Holy Spirit. Faith in the Triune God acknowledges the might and majesty of God but at the same time trusts in a creator God who cares, is personal (Jesus) and remains entangled in our lives. We are not kept at a distance; we are drawn into a loving and nurturing relationship.

As we move forward in the coming weeks, my prayer is that God would keep us steadfast in faith, especially in the moments when we feel left out, left behind or distracted by the decision-making.

God, who makes yourself known in our world, in our history and in our lives in different ways as creator, redeemer and sustainer help us to feel your presence in our daily lives so that we may seek out, find and draw ourselves into the unending dance of God's uplifting, unconditional, nurturing and sustaining love. Amen

Blessings, Skye

If anyone is interested in joining some discussions about life post Covid please contact Ginny Ross via ginnyross@oaklodge3.co.uk

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Book Review: what to read in lockdown?

The Hare with Amber Eyes by Edmund de Waal (2010)

Sometimes it's good to re-read a book and this is one of my favourites. 'Objects have always been stolen, retrieved and lost. It is how you tell their stories that matters'. This book is the real life story of 264 netsuke carvings and their ownership by generations of de Waal's family. Edward de Waal inherits the netsuke from his great uncle Iggy's Tokyo apartment and tells their story from acquisition by his wealthy ancestor Charles Ephrussi (who lived in Paris in the 1870s when Japanese art became fashionable in the West) to present day. From Paris, the netsuke were sent to Vienna as a wedding present and resided for a number of years in the Ephrussi family palace. Despite its wealth and culture the family was not fully accepted into polite Viennese society, because of its Jewish heritage. When Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany the family's art collection was stolen, its assets stripped and the palace requisitioned. The netsuke collection disappeared and was thought to have been lost forever but the story continued...This is a compelling tale, comprising a memoir, a travelogue, reflections on the impact of migration, exile and cultural misperceptions or put more simply, a book about things.

Recipe: what to cook in lockdown?

Banana Muffins

250g self-raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
110g caster sugar
75g butter melted
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 eggs
2 large ripe bananas, mashed
125ml buttermilk (or add 1 tsp lemon juice to milk and leave for 20mins)
Optional 50g pecans or walnuts and some have added 1 tsp mixed spice, chocolate chips or replaced pecans with maple syrup (I used mixed spice and walnuts)
Heat the oven to 190C/170C Fan/gas 5.
Line a 12-hole muffin tin with paper cases. Sift together the flour, baking powder, bicarb of soda and caster sugar with a big pinch of salt. In a separate bowl mix the melted butter, vanilla extract, eggs, mashed bananas and buttermilk.
Make a well in the centre of the dry ingredients and pour the wet ingredients in. Roughly mix together



with a fork, being careful not to over-mix. Scatter in the chopped pecans, if using, then spoon the mixture into the muffin cases. Top with pecan halves, then bake for 20-25 mins, until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack.

Nature notes: what to see during lockdown?

June ushers in glorious summer. Dog rose and creamy scented elder blossom adorn hedgerows. Look out for summer butterflies and moths at twilight. You may hear screaming swifts above and closer to the ground baby birds. If you find a fledgling, the advice is to leave it, as the parents will be close by. In the garden leaf-cutter bees are busily cutting tiny circles in foliage. June can be hot and dry, leaving wildlife struggling to find water. You can help by keeping your birdbath topped up and putting out saucers of water on the ground, helping mammals such as hedgehogs.



The common swift

And finally: what to quote?

Adlestrop by Edward Thomas

Yes. I remember Adlestrop
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop—only the name.

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.