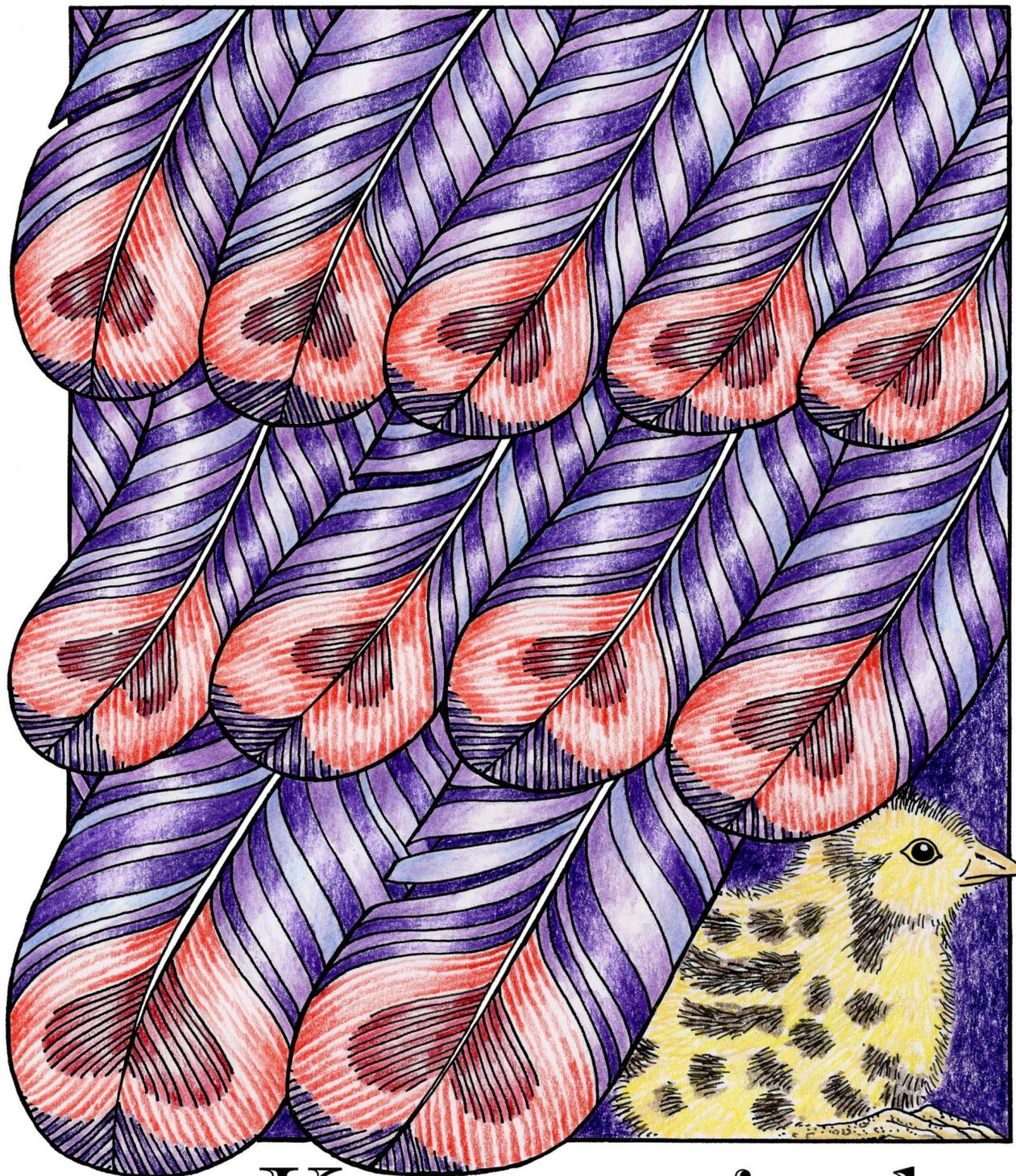


St Mary the Virgin—North Shoebury

February 2021



shelter of your wings Ps 17:8

Keep me in the

TUESDAY 2ND FEBRUARY—CANDLEMASS
SUNDAY 14TH FEBRUARY—ST VALENTINES DAY
TUESDAY 16TH FEBRUARY—SHROVE TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY 17TH FEBRUARY—ASH WEDNESDAY

Whether we agree with the politicians or not, I thought we should balance things out with a few kind words and some facts about our extraordinary Chief Medical Officer, Chris Witty.

A Physician and Epidemiologist who has dedicated his life to medical practice, research and teaching & considered to be one of the leading world experts on infectious diseases. He only took on the chief CMO role in October 2019, and until the virus threat emerged, he had never done interviews or held press conferences.

His father was murdered by terrorists in Athens in a case of mistaken identity when he was just a teenager. An event which he says left him "scarred" He has worked in various countries throughout Europe, Asia and Africa and played a leading role in the effort on the Ebola outbreak in 2014, when he held the post of chief scientific adviser at the Department for International Development.

Colleagues have described him as "Made for the role of CMO" and "an absolutely extraordinary, brilliant man" and "Exactly the man we need." He was volunteering on Covid wards over Christmas, while many of us were tucking into treats and staying home with our family. We should all be glad to have someone like this helping the country through a health crisis.

HAVE YOU ANYTHING FOR THIS MAGAZINE?

Thank you to David for his contributions this month. If you have anything which would be of interest, please contact the editor, Craig Hunter early in the month, so that your space can be reserved.

07932503644; chunter2009@hotmail.co.uk

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February 2021

Mark 5:7 *Then he cried out with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me."*

As I was preparing to write this month's letter, I looked at what I wrote last year. I commented on the speed with which the year was passing. Little did we know what was to happen as the year unfolded. It was the year of Matthew, so I used Matthew 6:34 to head that letter. You might find it worth looking at again.

Mark's Gospel

This passage comes from the Gospel of Mark. This year, the readings will be taken mostly from Mark, but as Mark does not record the events of the birth of Christ, we have had to wait. This Gospel was the first to be written. It is short, immediate, has a sense of urgency about it. This makes people inclined to read it fast. It can be read in an afternoon; I have done it. In church it is rare that we ever get a complete picture of a Gospel, which is sad, because only when we read it is a complete piece can we really see the whole picture.

Recently I started reading Rowan Williams' book *"Meeting God in Mark"*. He suggests that we read it slowly, through Lent. This year Ash Wednesday is on the 17th February. In the weekly newsletter I will give a list of that week's readings and maybe some short reflections.

Lent 2021

While on the subject of Lent, because of the continued need to keep safe, there will be no Ash Wednesday Service in church, and no ashing. I will hold a service of some sort on Ash Wednesday that will be streamed to Facebook and YouTube, but I have not yet worked out quite what to do yet. But during Lent, there will be Morning Prayer each morning at 9:00. If you wish to share in this, please let me know and I will send the Zoom link.

Last year/next year

In this last year, I have seen this church grow so much. Although meeting together is not possible, as a community we appear to be gaining strength through adversity.

We all have to answer for ourselves the opening question. "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"

I have been asking us, both as a church and as individuals, to look at what **living in the Kingdom of God** might look like. When we do, we have to deal with Jesus; up close and personal.

You will have heard me say on more than one occasion that during my life I have felt the hand of God on my shoulder. Sometimes this has been an encouraging hand, sometimes a comforting hand, sometimes a challenging hand.

The opening Bible verse is taken from Mark 5:1-20 which is the reading for 1st February and they are the words of the tormented man who has the name Legion. Read this passage if you have time. Things will get better, but we seem surrounded by bad news at the moment, I have some sympathy for Legion. Let us never forget that in our darkest hours, God is still with us, His hand on our shoulder.

**God bless
David**

Mountains make you feel better

The natural environment can make a real impact on your mood. Mountains can leave you feeling more optimistic, while the ocean can help boost your inspiration.

A recent study at Goldsmiths University of London found that water is most effective at increasing positive emotions, such as happiness and inspiration. Woodlands can help you forget your worries, and fields and meadows can enhance your energy levels.

We are indeed lucky to live in such a beautiful part of the world, enjoy the outdoors.

Follow a new pilgrim path

In the south of England, a new pilgrim path is emerging. Winding through downland, weald and shoreline for 250 miles, the Old Way from Southampton to Canterbury is derived from the oldest road map of Britain: the Gough Map, c.1360.

Like the Santiago de Compostela in Spain, this ancient route has lain dormant for years. But it has been recently rediscovered by the British Pilgrimage Trust, who have used the Gough Map's key anchor waypoints (corresponding to settlements like Southampton, Chichester, Arundel, Battle, Rye etc) to create a new pilgrimage route with ancient roots.

In unison with the Old Way's development, the British Pilgrimage Trust are also reintroducing another ancient – and similarly dormant – tradition. The offering of 'sanctuary' hospitality to pilgrims along a pilgrimage route was, up until the English Reformation of 1534, common practice. Monasteries throughout the country would have had a room or building reserved specifically for travellers, who would rely on these sanctuaries in order to make pilgrimage. When pilgrimage was banned in 1538, and monasteries demolished, these two practices – making pilgrimage, and providing sanctuary – ceased, lying fallow for hundreds of years.

It is natural, then, that with the re-emergence of pilgrimage in the UK, the provision of sanctuary should likewise become common practice again. The BPT has worked with 13 churches along the Old Way, who will offer overnight sanctuary to BPT pilgrims walking the route, in exchange for a donation (between £5-£10 per pilgrim for one night) to their church. In Spring 2021, Covid-19 permitting, the Sanctuary Project will launch.

The BPT is looking for more churches, based along this route and in other locations across Britain, to take up this project. This is a fantastic opportunity: not only will the project enable pilgrims on lower incomes to make pilgrimage, but it will also bring a new type of visitor and donation to churches.

To find out more about the BPT's Sanctuary Project, visit: britishpilgrimage.org/sanctuary

St James the Least of All

On why our church does not need health or safety...



The Rectory

St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

I appreciated your recent concern when you heard one of our parishioners had slipped on a gravestone. Your desire to help was entirely commendable, and I do know that sending your own church's health and safety officer to give us some advice was kindly meant. But the 200-page report was not welcome. If we implemented even half of your officer's suggestions, life would become unbearably safe.

St James the Least of All has survived perfectly well for the last 600 years without gutter cleaning inspections, path degreasing and electrical safety certificates, so I think we may survive a little longer without them. As far as I am aware, the only disaster to hit us was when Cromwell's soldiers stabled their horses in the nave – which I suspect a few of our oldest members still clearly remember.

The shock the sidesmen sometimes get when switching on the lights occurs only occasionally, is relatively mild and soon over – and if it happens when preparing for the 8am Service, helps to wake them up. The weight of the Duke of Clumber's marble sarcophagus *is* slowly detaching the south aisle from the rest of the church, but it is very slow – and the pews in that area are used only once a year when his relations visit from America to commemorate his death at Agincourt – which is probably just beyond remembrance of the oldest of our congregation.

Leaks from the ceiling in the north aisle are solved with a row of buckets – and even you must concede that the fungi on the oak beams look really rather attractive when the sun catches them. The sapling growing out of the spire is certainly an issue – although it looks so attractive in Spring when in blossom. As for our fire extinguishers, they were serviced when my predecessor-but-two was in office, and I have the certificate to prove it.

So, do thank your health and safety officer for all his work and tell him we will bear his recommendations in mind. Also tell him I was so sorry he slipped and broke his leg in our choir stalls while he was with us. But that bit of floor has been out of alignment since 1748, and it seems a shame to disturb it now. If only he had arrived encased in bubble wrap, it would never have happened. Perhaps you could put that on the agenda of your next health and safety meeting.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

If you would like to sponsor a magazine, for a birthday, anniversary, in memory or for thanksgiving, please contact Francine.

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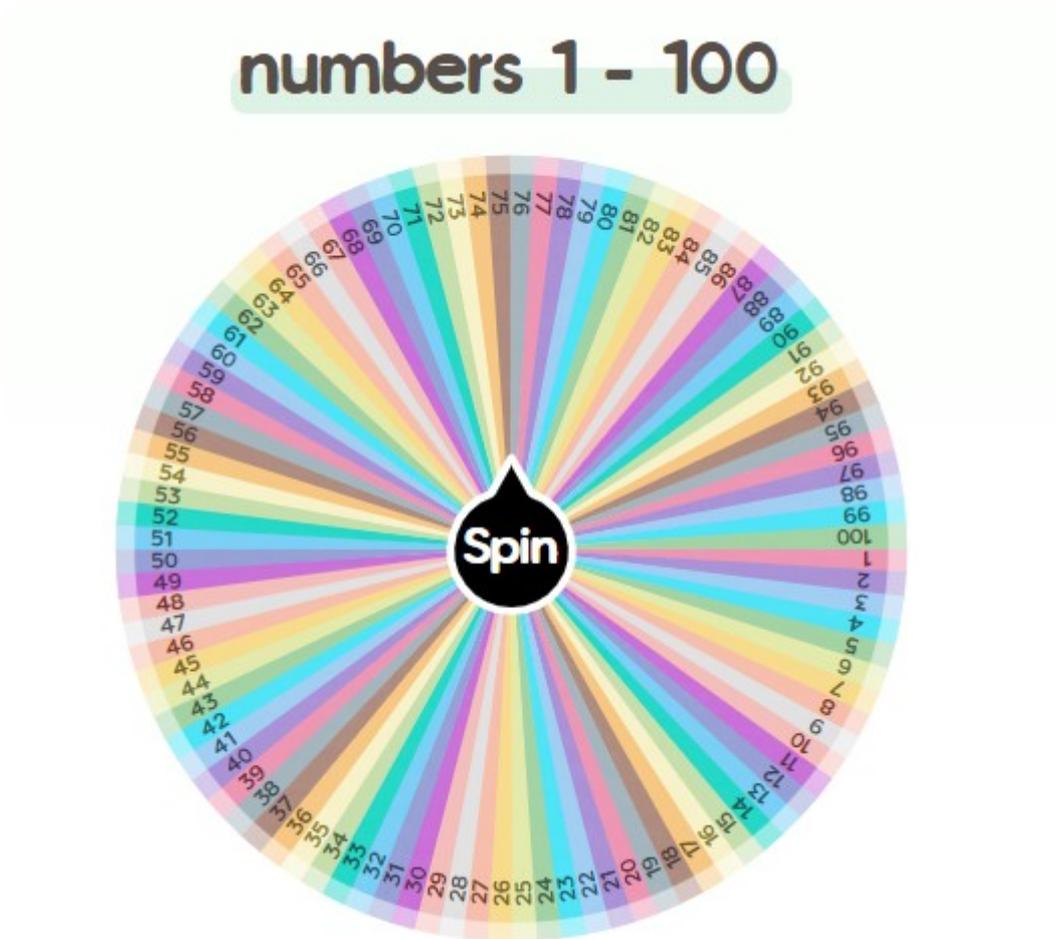
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St Mary's Rational Lottery 100 Club

As we go to print we have sold 64 numbers so there are still 36 places for friends, neighbours, family members, work colleagues and others to join in before the next draw on **28th February**. It would be so good to carry on the year with a “full house”. Please make one last effort to get one more participant each!

Some of you will know former members of the congregation who have moved away—please ask them to join.



Winning numbers in January were:

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As we mark Valentines' Day this month, it's good to ask the question:

What does real love look like?

The Apostle Paul says: *'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.'* (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8).

Love is unconditional:

At heart, love is not just feelings but action! Paul talks here about unconditional love, using the word *agape*, which demonstrated in God's love for us: *'We love, because He first loved us.'* (1 John 4:19).

Love is forgiving:

According to the film *Love Story*, *'Love means never having to say you're sorry.'* This is rarely true in our experience! According to Paul, love is being ready to forgive others and *'keeping no record of wrongs'* (5). We can only forgive others because we know God forgiveness in our own lives.

Love is sacrificial:

Paul says that *agape* love is not selfish or self-seeking, but selfless and self-sacrificial, putting the needs of other people first. This is modelled by Jesus giving His life for us on the cross. Take the words from 1 Corinthians and instead of the word *love*, substitute your own name. Now substitute the word *Jesus*. This is the Jesus who is available to you to make your love for others grow and flourish.

Someone once compared love being like a group of porcupines huddling together on a cold night. The closer they get, the more they jab and hurt each other. *'To love at all is to be vulnerable.'* (C S Lewis).

'Jesus is patient, he is kind. He does not envy, he does not boast, he is not proud. Jesus does not dishonour others, he is not self-seeking, he is not easily angered, he keeps no record of wrongs. Jesus does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. He always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Jesus never fails.' (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8).

It is not enough to love – you need to be loved

Sometimes we can be inclined to give and give and give to others - without asking anything in return. We may think that this is a sign of generosity - of great strength. But it can also be one of pride - we want to be seen as the one who does not need help. Or it can be a sign of very low self-esteem - we do not think we are worth receiving anything from others.

Whatever the reason, when we keep giving, without also receiving, we put ourselves in danger - we will burn out quickly. It is as important to know when we need to TAKE attention and care, as when we need to give it to others. If you do not pay careful attention to your own needs - whether physical, emotional, mental or spiritual - you will not last the distance.

If you want to remain a joyful giver for years to come, you need also to be a joyful taker and accept God's love, given to you through other people.

The birds and bees

Here is some good news: all new major roads will have wildflower-friendly verges that could boost our numbers of birds and bees.

Highway England has said that vibrant road verges will be created as standard on new roads over 300 miles in England, using low nutrient soils which will be seeded with wildflowers or left to grow naturally.

A staggering 97 per cent of our meadows have been destroyed since the Thirties, due to modern agriculture. This means that the 238,000 hectares of road verges across the UK could become a vital habitat for pollinators.

The Government has pledged to build 4,000 miles of new road by 2025.

CONTACT DETAILS

For all enquiries, including weddings, baptisms, blessings etc. please, in the first instance, contact Pat Fitch.

01702 585289

Phone numbers are all area code 01702 unless stated

Lead Minister	Revd. David Pierce	07305 710265 david@revdavidpierce.net
Churchwarden	Craig Hunter	07932 503644 chunter2009@hotmail.co.uk
Hall Bookings	Phyl Wickenden	582185
	Francine Johnson	589244
PCC Secretary	Michelle Waters	589026
Church Finance & Gift Aid Secretary	Francine Johnson	589244
Electoral Roll	Sue Arnold	586453
Church Diaries & Flowers co-ordinator	Wendy Shipperley	588319
Social, Hall & Fundraising	Francine Johnson	589244
	Phyl Wickenden	582185
Readers, Chalice Assistants & Sides persons Rota	Church Warden	
Parish Magazine	Craig Hunter	07932 503644 chunter2009@hotmail.co.uk
Churchyard Safeguarding Officer	(Vacancy) Pat Fitch	585289

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www.stmarynorthshoebury.org.uk

Do me a favour? - A cautionary tale.

I just had an email from a clergyman, saying, “Hi” and asking me to do him “a favor”. I replied to say yes, of course. I then began to wonder why he had not said what sort of favour it was, and why he was asking me.

I decided to telephone him and find why he had not explained. His wife answered and said: “Is it about the fake email?” I could tell from her tone of voice that I was not the first caller.

This was a scam of some sort and probably the favour was to send money. The same day someone else in the same parish had their accounts hacked. The email addresses used were correct, but if had looked carefully I would have noticed he would not spell “favour” like that and not say “Hi”.

This all makes me quite cross, because these scammers are playing on church members’ kindness. A friend of mine also got the email and was upset that someone else was in trouble. We need to be aware of the risks and look out for messages of any kind which seem strange.

Criminals target churches and pretend to send emails from people in authority such as clergy, churchwardens or treasurers. They prey on our credulity and charity.

What should we do?

If you get a telephone call or email you and you are not sure if it is genuine, use another form of communication to check.

It is a crime, so report it to the authorities. If it is connected to a church, tell your diocese or governing body.

The scammers must have got these addresses from somewhere. How easy would it be to get a list of the names and addresses of your minister, leaders and treasurer?

Lastly, carry on being generous and kind.

These scammers should not stop us !



Forty days and forty nights

On the 17th of this month, we enter the season of Lent: those 40 days when we follow Jesus into the wilderness and prepare ourselves to celebrate His Easter victory. In the last century an artist called Stanley Spencer planned to create a series of 40 paintings, each depicting a day in the wilderness. In the end he completed nine, one of which is this month's painting from 1939: 'Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions.' It is currently held in a private collection.

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/christ-in-the-wilderness-the-scorpion>

Stanley Spencer lived and worked in the village of Cookham in Berkshire. The village and the local countryside were the setting for many of his paintings, and the village's inhabitants his models. Through their everyday life he was trying to glimpse and convey the transcendent. 'Angels and dirt' he called it: the divine seen in the ordinary. So, in a painting of Christ carrying His cross, Jesus has the face of the local grocer.

Another villager modelled for this Jesus in the wilderness: a strong, hefty, broad figure. This is a great contrast to the Christ of stained-glass windows who often seems too good to be part of our world. Here is real life: a large man filling the canvas with his head, his hands and his feet. This figure of Jesus comes as a shock: a very human model, ordinary with nothing handsome or special about him, apart from his tunic which seems to sprawl and undulate like the hills around. Here is a Jesus born into this world and one with this world.

There are two focal points in the painting – the neat, little scorpion and the massive, unkempt head contemplating each other. One is life in all its hefty reality; the other a tiny creature able to squeeze that life out by one swift flick of its tail.

Jesus is shown in the wilderness pondering the life and ministry called of Him by God – a life and ministry that will take Him from the countryside into the towns and villages and take Him also to the death of Good Friday. Will He find the strength and renewal to embrace that ministry during His time in the desert? During Lent as we follow Jesus, we seek to live for God. That may mean dying to all that separates us from God.

He has a ministry, a calling for each of us. As we contemplate that calling in this season of Lent, we may find it is a calling that leads us through these 40 days to life and Easter life – we may find it a journey that calls us to die to self to find our God.

For more:

[Stanley Spencer: Of Angels and Dirt - YouTube](#)

[Stanley Spencer: A collection of 210 paintings \(HD\) - YouTube](#)

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To the nation

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

26 January 2021

Dear friends

As we reach the terrible milestone of 100,000 deaths from COVID-19, we invite everyone in our nation to pause as we reflect on the enormity of this pandemic. 100,000 isn't just an abstract figure. Each number is a person: someone we loved and someone who loved us. We also believe that each of these people was known to God and cherished by God. We write to you then in consolation, but also in encouragement, and ultimately in the hope of Jesus Christ.

The God who comes to us in Jesus knew grief and suffering himself. On the cross, Jesus shares the weight of our sadness. We therefore encourage everyone who is feeling scared, or lost or isolated to cast their fears on God.

We also know that poorer communities, minority ethnic communities and those living with disabilities have been afflicted disproportionately and cry out for the healing of these inequalities. During this pandemic, we encourage everyone to do all they can to live within the guidelines and constraints given by government following the advice of the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Adviser. We show our commitment, care and love for one another by ensuring we do everything we can to stop the virus spreading.

None of this is easy. Very many of us are experiencing isolation, loneliness, anxiety and despondency like never before. Many people have lost their livelihoods. Our economy struggles. Also, the necessary restrictions we live with have also prevented us from being alongside loved ones as they died, or even at their graveside. All grief profoundly affects us, but this pandemic grief is so hard. following the guidelines. But we also do it by reaching out

Therefore, we need to support each other. We do this by One thing we can all do is pray. We hope it is some consolation to know that the church prays for the life of our nation every day. Whether you're someone of faith, or not, we invite you to call on God in prayer. Starting on 1 February we invite you to set aside time every evening to pray, particularly at 6pm each day. More than ever, this is a time when we need to love each other. Prayer is an expression of love. A number of resources will be made available at www.ChurchofEngland.org/PrayerForTheNation.

Finally, we write of hope. We are grateful for the hope we have because of the service of our NHS and social care staff. What a blessing and lifeline for our nation. We are grateful for the service given in local communities by clergy, other frontline workers and so many good neighbours. We are grateful for the hope of the vaccine. It is a testimony to the God-given wisdom and gifts of scientists and researchers. We urge everyone to take the vaccine as soon as it is offered to you. Most of all, we have hope because God raised Jesus from the dead. This is the Christian hope that we will be celebrating at Easter. We live in the hope that we will share in his resurrection. Death doesn't have the last word. In God's kingdom every tear will be wiped away. Please be assured of our prayers.

Please join us.



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